

CAPSULE

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WHAT'S INSIDE?

California State Scientists Reject Tentative Agreement, Will Resume Bargaining With Newsom

Bargaining, What's Next?

Four CAPS Members Receive Grants

President's Column: What's Coming in 2023

CAPS Grants Increased to \$500

CAPS Principles

Recruit a Member, Earn Some Cash

CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENTISTS REJECT TENTATIVE AGREEMENT, WILL RESUME BARGAINING WITH NEWSOM

Nearly 60 percent of ballots cast by California Association of Professional Scientists members were "no" votes.

CAPS issued the press release below on February 2. By the next day, at least 256 outlets had published it on their websites, including news media in San Diego, Los Angeles, the Bay Area, Bakersfield, Fresno, Sacramento, and Eureka. The Associated Press, Google, Bing, Yahoo, Ask, Facebook, and Twitter picked it up, and The Sacramento Bee wrote two news stories that sourced the release.

SACRAMENTO – The California Association of Professional Scientists (CAPS) has announced that its members have resoundingly rejected a tentative labor agreement reached in December with Governor Gavin Newsom's administration.

The official count was 751 in favor of ratification (40.70%) and 1094 against (59.30%). Two-thirds of those eligible (1845 of 2744 rank-and-file members) participated.

"CAPS is a democratic union, and our members have spoken," said CAPS Bargaining Committee Chair Jacqueline Tkac. "So now we will return to the table with a crystal-clear signal to the administration: You must do better by State Scientists."

CAPS represents more than 5,300 California State Scientists in Bargaining Unit 10. Their vital roles include protecting public health and the environment, securing the food supply, addressing climate change and ecosystem loss, and developing green energy.

Despite that important work, State Scientists' wages for nearly two decades have lagged 30% or more compared to the salaries paid to counterparts in similar state, local, and federal positions. Their wages have also fallen behind those of their supervisors and managers by a similar percentage. As a result, programs are suffering because the State struggles to retain scientists for more than a few years before they move on for better pay. The constant turnover is harming vital state programs that serve Californians.

CAPS has been bargaining to close the gap for many years, including the 31 months since its last

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) expired on July 1, 2020. Salaries have been a major sticking point to reaching a successor agreement. Also high on the union's agenda: Additional cost-of-living compensation for members in California's most expensive regions and "longevity pay" to incentivize the most experienced scientists to stay with the State.

The tentative agreement that CAPS members rejected this week provided a 4% salary increase for more than 80% of Unit 10 scientists, retroactive to November 1, 2022. The remaining employees would have received retroactive increases of 10% or 2.5%, depending on their classifications. On July 1, 2023, all Unit 10 employees in the unit would have received a 2% raise, followed by another 2% increase on the agreement's last day, July 1, 2024. [The Sacramento Bee](#) noted the salary terms fell "well short" of CAPS' agenda.

Under state law, the union's expired contract terms remain effective until a new agreement is in place. The CAPS bargaining team has notified the Governor's Department of Human Resources of the vote results and requested talks resume immediately.

ABOUT CAPS: CAPS represents roughly 5,300 state-employed rank and file and managerial scientists working in over 30 state departments in 81 scientific classifications. CAPS members protect the public from life threatening diseases, safeguard our wildlife, abundant natural resources, and food supply, and protect our air and water from toxic waste and pollution.

BARGAINING

WHAT'S NEXT?

Your CAPS Bargaining Team (CAPS Team) intends to return to the table as soon as possible to resume bargaining with CalHR (which represents Governor Newsom) for a successor Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The CAPS Team is dedicated to reaching an MOU that makes all of us proud because it reflects the value of State Scientists' expertise and commitment, while restoring the State as a career destination for our industry.

THE CAPS TEAM'S TOP PRIORITIES ARE:

- **Securing salaries that are on par with those paid to counterparts in local, State, and federal governments.**
- **Restoring the appropriate, historical salary relationships between Unit 10 rank and file employees and their supervisors and managers.**
- **Providing meaningful family leave benefits.**
- **Establishing geopay for State Scientists.**
- **Improving benefits wherever possible, including telework flexibility.**

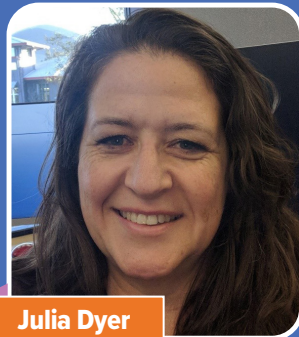
WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

- **Talk to a colleague about joining CAPS. The State knows the size of every union's membership and assumes units with a smaller percentage are disengaged and easy to bully.**
- **When we call for member action, SHOW UP. Collective action is collective. We need you there, with us, on the front lines – whether they are online or on the street – reminding state leaders, Californians, and the world of the vital services you provide to them.**

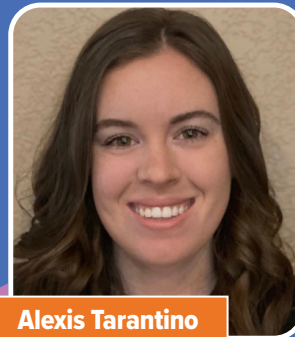
FOUR CAPS MEMBERS RECEIVE GRANTS



Stephanie Abromaitis



Julia Dyer



Alexis Tarantino



Ruihong Xiao

For several years, CAPS' Member Benefits Committee has awarded up to four Professional Development Grants of \$400 each quarter. The grants – for which only members are eligible – pay for research, education, and other professional development activities that the State does not fully fund. The Committee recently awarded grants to these four deserving CAPS members whose applications were considered for the last quarter of 2022:

Stephanie Abromaitis received a grant to reimburse her expenses for review courses

required to earn licensure in public health microbiology. As a Research Scientist Supervisor II, Stephanie told the Benefits Committee, "If I have this license, I will be able to perform and review diagnostic testing performed in my program." Stephanie works for the **Department of Public Health's Richmond facility**.

Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist) **Julia Dyer** won \$400 to pay for digitizing approximately 1,100 old photo slides that capture the historical conditions of facilities and sites managed by her employer, the

Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. The slides, some of which date back to the 1960s, are a subset of several thousand in the Board's archives that can't be closely examined, Julia wrote, "due to the lack of a functioning slide projector." Once digitized, State Scientists can use the pictures to "extend their research of environmental change over time ... bring attention to the importance of the historical data, and ideally lead to management earmarking additional funds to digitize the entire slide archive."

Alexis Tarantino is an Environmental

... continued on page 3 >>>

WHAT'S COMING IN 2023

It's hard to believe I'm in my final year as your president. As I look ahead, here's what I anticipate for our union in 2023:

BARGAINING.

With members' resounding "no" vote on the Tentative Agreement, our CAPS Team will return to the table as quickly as possible with a crystal-clear message that Governor Newsom's last offer was not acceptable. Our new Bargaining Committee Chair, Jacqueline Tkac, will lead the team with vigor and creative thinking. Since assuming her role in November 2022, Jacqueline has already shown leadership skills and media savvy that will serve State Scientists well as we continue the fight for Unit 10 pay equity.

MEMBER ACTIONS.

2022 was a big year for member engagement with marches, media events, petitions, personal letter-writing programs, the "Flat Gavin" social media campaign, and other actions that amplified our insistence on reaching a fair and equitable Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Look for more actions this year as we work collectively to reach an agreement all of us want.

CAPITOL EVENT COMEBACK.

CAPS is bringing California's biggest outdoor science classroom back to the State Capitol on May 3. For nearly 40 years, "State Scientist Day" drew hundreds of kids to the Capitol – until pandemic public health concerns lead CAPS to discontinue the annual event. State Scientists from throughout state government will set up educational displays on the

Capitol grounds to teach science to hundreds of school kids bussed in from around the region. Look for upcoming CAPS emails and this newsletter for more details.

MEMBER RECRUITING.

From the beginning of July 2022 through the end of January 2023, the number of CAPS rank and file members grew from 2,525 to 2,744. Put another way, our rank and file membership numbers increased 8.7% – and that was after accounting for retirements and severances from service. There are many reasons for the upturn, but they distill to this: CAPS put more resources into recruiting last year because it is the lifeblood of our union. Our collective power – at the bargaining table, in the statehouse and the courthouse, departments, the media, and everywhere else our interests are at stake – comes from strong membership.

I expect to see our membership continue growing as we move through 2023, but to build our power we need to increase the overall percentage of Unit 10 scientists who are CAPS members. Currently, about 64% of Unit 10 employees are members. We need more. You can help build that power by talking with colleagues who aren't members and explaining why we need them to join us.

MEMBER RETENTION.

Look for some new programs from our Membership and Communications Committee this year that aim to build a sense of collectivism and community among State Scientists. It is important that we lean on each other through expressions of solidarity, support and gratitude – especially in trying times. In the coming months, you'll be hearing more about how CAPS will foster those bonds.

BOARD ELECTION.

CAPS has always been committed to democratic principles. We understand that collective power comes from individual commitment, and one expression of that is when members vote. In a few months, candidates will make their cases to represent you for the various seats on our Board, including the position I'm honored to hold now. You'll be hearing more from our independent Elections Committee. When the time comes, please vote.

... Grants continued from page 2 >>>

Scientist and Climate Change Policy Advisor for **Caltrans** in Sacramento. "There have been a lot of changes and updates in the Climate Change policy world," Alexis wrote the grant application to cover UC Davis coursework toward a Land Use and Environmental Planning Certificate. "It's my job to update district staff on those updates. These courses are taught by experts in the field and are closely relevant to what I do."

Research Scientist II **Ruihong Xiao** received a grant to help offset the tuition fees for online post-graduate courses from Ohio University. "My job (with the **Richmond offices of the Department of Public Health**) requires a master's or a Ph.D. to do a better job, so for professional development purposes, I'm advancing my knowledge."

CAPS GRANTS INCREASED TO \$500

The Member Benefits Committee is pleased to announce that Professional Development Grants will increase from \$400 each to \$500 each for winning applications considered for the first quarter of 2023 and later. The Committee awards up to four grants per quarter. The next quarterly deadline to apply is **March 31**. For more details about CAPS' Professional Development Grants and how to apply for this members-only benefit, please go to capsscientists.org/application/benefits/grant. Certain limitations apply. If you have questions, please contact CAPS staff at 916-441-2629 or caps@capsscientists.org.



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CAPS' PRINCIPLES



PROFESSIONALISM:

CAPS is committed to helping individual scientists fulfill their needs as professionals with roles in the community of science and with occupational roles as well.



INDEPENDENCE:

CAPS members are pledged to pursuing professional courses of action, determined without regard to political influences.



PROFESSIONAL ADVOCACY:

CAPS takes a firm but responsible approach to representing its membership in legislative matters, contract negotiations, and individual personnel actions.

RECRUIT A MEMBER, EARN SOME CASH

CAPS has produced a series of flyers titled "Did You Know?" that inform new-to-state-service scientists about the benefits of CAPS membership. You can help spread the word by printing and posting these flyers in your workspace and your building's union bulletin board. See the flyer at capsscientists.org/resources/infographics/. CAPS rewards members who recruit new members with a \$50 incentive! Just make sure your name is in the "Referred by" field in the member application, which is also on the CAPS website at capsscientists.org/application/.



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APPLICATION!

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