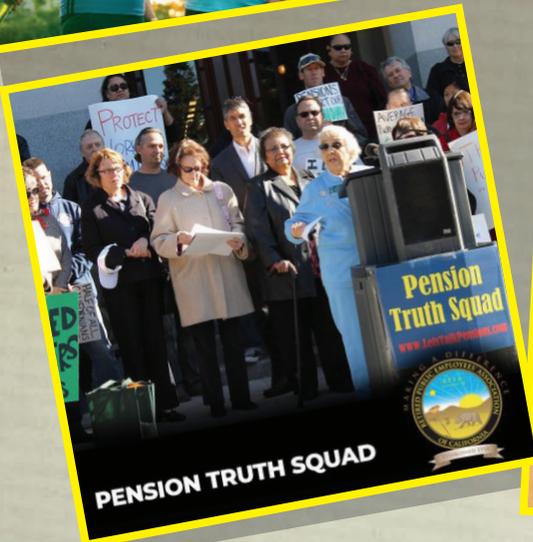




RETIRED PUBLIC EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA

2024

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Rosemary Knox

RPEA PRESIDENT



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RPEA NEWSLETTER

Published 6 times a year by the Retired Public Employees' Association of California
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Published in Partnership with Burks Printing & Promotions

President's New Year Message

Happy New Year! I trust the beginning of the year has brought you peace and renewal. In the words of Goran Persson, "Let our New Year's resolution be this: We will be there for one another as fellow members of humanity, in the finest sense of the word."

Reflecting on this sentiment, I contemplate whether we are truly there for one another. Unfortunately, the challenges persist, notably in the realm of safeguarding our members' private information from the disregard shown by CalPERS. During the December 12th, 2023 CalPERS Retiree Roundtable, an unsettling revelation unfolded. CalPERS announced its intention to pursue a "no-bid contract" with Socure, another third-party vendor, to identify deceased CalPERS members and beneficiaries. The rationale provided was the possession of a certification that the previous vendor, PBI, did not have.

However, a recent conversation with Brad Pacheco and Kim Malm at CalPERS revealed that Socure lacks FedRamp certification. Consequently, CalPERS cannot engage Socure until May at the earliest for identifying deceased members. The misrepresentations in CEO Marcie Frost's letter to Assemblymember McCarty, specifically regarding Socure's FedRamp certification, raise serious concerns about accountability and fiduciary responsibility.

1. January 11, 2024 Letter to CalPERS Board Members from Assemblymember Kevin McCarty.

2. January 13, 2024 Letter from Marcie Frost in response to Assemblymember Kevin McCarty's letter.

3. January 29, 2024 E-mail to Natalie Shin, office of Assemblymember Kevin McCarty.

To shed light on these matters, RPEA will remain vigilant and keep you informed. Our commitment to transparency and accountability drives our advocacy for accurate information and responsible actions from CalPERS.

In this newsletter, the RPEA Board shares the latest updates on CalPERS. Al Darby, Vice President, provides insights into topics discussed at the January CalPERS Board meeting, while Randall Cheek, Legislative Director, anticipates a politically active year ahead. Loran Vetter, Chair of the Committee for Chapter Community Involvement, emphasizes the positive impact of helping others, offering a beacon of hope for the future. These articles, among others, aim to provide you with a comprehensive view of the current state of affairs. Enjoy the read!

Rosemary Knox

RPEA President



Letter to CalPERS Board from Assemblyman McCarty

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January 11, 2024

CalPERS Board Members
400 Q Street
Sacramento, California 95811

Dear CalPERS Board Members,

As Assemblymember of California's Sixth District and Chair of the Assembly Committee on Public Safety, I am reaching out on behalf of concerned CalPERS retirees. It has come to my attention that your third-party vendor, PBI Research Services/Berwyn Group (PBI) experienced a breach that revealed the private and personal information of 769,000 retirees.

Despite this breach, it is my understanding that CalPERS has announced its intent to contract with another third-party vendor – Socure – to resume PBI's task of identifying deceased CalPERS members and beneficiaries. This is concerning given the lack of transparency provided to retirees in regards to how their information will now be better protected moving forward.

Before CalPERS enters into a contact with Socure at the upcoming January 2024 Board meeting, I believe concerned retirees deserve to have a number of their questions addressed: 1) What is the reason(s) CalPERS is entertaining entering another no-bid, sole source contract, which lacks transparency and accountability to the public? 2) What is the reason(s) CalPERS staff is recommending Socure? 3) What guarantees has CalPERS secured to ensure that personal data will not be hacked again? 4) Why should members believe its personal data is safe with Socure and will not be breached when it involves an electronic-file transfer?

Given the rapid rise in identity theft and data breaches, these are serious concerns that must be considered and addressed. The 769,000 retirees impacted by the PBI breach will be warding off the elevated risk for identity theft and fraud for the rest of their lives. CalPERS has the fiduciary responsibility to protect its members' personal data, and retirees deserve to know what is being done to ensure their private information is safe.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. I am looking forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin McCarty". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

KEVIN McCARTY
Assemblymember, 6th District



California Public Employees' Retirement System
Executive Office

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The Honorable Kevin McCarty
1021 O Street, Suite 5610,
Sacramento, CA 95814

January 13, 2024

Dear Assemblymember McCarty,

Thank you for your January 11, 2024, letter to the CalPERS Board of Administration regarding the recent PBI Research Services/Berwyn Group ("PBI") data breach and our decision to contract with Socure for services to help identify member deaths and ensure proper payments are made to retirees and beneficiaries. I can assure you that CalPERS is committed to the security and privacy of our members' personal data as well as our fiduciary duty to manage the retirement system's assets, which includes the responsibility to identify unreported member deaths. We welcome the opportunity to answer your questions.

As has been reported in the news, the PBI data breach involved the MOVEit Transfer Application, which is used by thousands of organizations worldwide. This application had a previously unknown "zero-day" vulnerability that allowed an unauthorized third party to download data from over 1,000 organizations, including CalPERS, impacting over 60 million people. Although this event did not impact CalPERS technology and data systems, we took immediate steps to enhance the security of our members' benefits. This includes new protocols on the member benefits website, myCalPERS, as well as additional safeguards for those who use the member call center or visit any CalPERS regional office. CalPERS also continues to thoroughly vet the security procedures of its vendors that receive member information.

We have shared this information with our retiree community and recently held a meeting with the leaders of the associations that represent our retirees. In that meeting, we provided an update on our efforts to replace PBI with Socure and made our team available to answer any questions.

As we explained in our update, after researching several companies to replace the services provided by PBI, we selected Socure, a digital identity verification company that serves more than 1,900 financial institutions, government agencies and enterprises across all industries. What makes Socure unique is that they're the first vendor in this field to achieve FedRAMP certification. FedRAMP is the Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program, a government-wide program that promotes the adoption of secure cloud services across the

federal government by providing a standardized approach to security and risk assessment. Vendors that achieve this certification must undergo a rigorous security assessment process which includes a comprehensive examination of their security controls and processes. This is not a one-time certification; it involves continuous monitoring to ensure that the security controls remain effective over time. Furthermore, the security controls in FedRAMP exceed those required by the State of California. It is also important to note that Socure was not impacted by the recent MOVEit Transfer Application security breach.

Below are the answers to your specific questions:

1. What is the reason(s) CalPERS is entertaining entering another no-bid, sole source contract, which lacks transparency and accountability to the public?

CalPERS has entered into a no-bid, sole source contract for date of death verification services because Socure possesses unique expertise and capabilities that are critical in supporting our organization in the fulfillment of our fiduciary obligations to administer and safeguard the retirement system. This includes the FedRAMP certification mentioned above. Unlike other potential vendors, Socure offers highly customizable secure solutions tailored to the unique demands of our organization that enable them to adapt their services to our specific requirements and data security needs and standards.

Entering a sole source contract with this date of death verification service vendor also establishes a strategic partnership that facilitates a long-term collaboration, commitment to information security, ongoing support, and continuous improvement that aligns with our organizational values and future growth plans.

We are confident that selecting Socure is in the best interest of CalPERS and will result in a secure and efficient date of death verification process that meets our unique requirements.

2. What is the reason(s) CalPERS staff is recommending Socure?

In addition, to being the only vendor that is FEDRAMP certified, Socure's track record in delivering this solution has been well-established. Their ability to adapt their services to our specific requirements and data security needs and standards ensures that we receive a solution that is not only effective in identifying member deaths that have gone unreported to CalPERS, but secures our member data while in the vendor's possession.

3. What guarantees has CalPERS secured to ensure that personal data will not be hacked again?

Cybersecurity is a top priority for CalPERS. No institution can guarantee that their data will never be hacked, however CalPERS has enhanced its information security requirements and protections within the Socure contract to further protect member data, including:

- Stronger access controls to restrict access and movement of our data,
- Regular security audits and assessments certified by an external third party,

- Reducing the frequency of sharing data between CalPERS and the vendor, and
- Requiring the vendor provide proof of data destruction at regular intervals.

4. Why should members believe its personal data is safe with Socure and will not be breached when it involves an electronic-file transfer?

Cybersecurity threats are dynamic, and even organizations with strong security measures can face breaches due to evolving tactics used by cybercriminals.

In addition to the considerable protections afforded by the vendor's FedRAMP certified environment, we are taking steps to ensure that Socure has comprehensive and up-to-date security measures in place. These include:

- Adherence to all relevant security standards and certifications,
- Documented processes for data protection, access control, incident response, and other security-related aspects,
- Encrypted transmission and storage to protect sensitive data and safeguard information from unauthorized access,
- Regular security audits and assessments conducted by the vendor or third-party assessors,
- Well-defined incident response plan that outlines the steps the vendor will take in the event of a security incident and how they will communicate with affected parties,
- Employee training programs related to cybersecurity, and
- Cybersecurity insurance coverage to provide financial protection in the event of a security incident.

CalPERS has also established regular communication and periodic security reviews to maintain a proactive and vigilant approach to cybersecurity.

Thank you again for the opportunity to answer your questions. We will make them available to our retiree community.

Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at (916) 795-3829, or your staff can contact Danny Brown, Chief of our Legislative Affairs Division, at (916) 795-2565, if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Marcie Frost
Chief Executive Officer

cc: CalPERS Board of Administration
Assembly Committee on Public Employment and Retirement
Senate Committee on Labor, Public Employment and Retirement



RETIREE PUBLIC EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA

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Subject: Urgent: Addressing Critical Concerns Regarding CalPERS Actions

Dear Natalie,

I hope this message finds you well. As the President of the Retired Public Employees Association (RPEA), I am writing to express my deep concern and opposition to the hazardous actions undertaken by CalPERS regarding the identification of deceased members to prevent overpayments of benefits.

Firstly, I would like to thank you for your collaboration with Dev Berger on this matter and the questions you have raised with CalPERS. However, it has become evident that more decisive action is imperative.

As you are aware, the exposure of the personal data of 769,000 CalPERS retirees/beneficiaries through the breach of its third-party vendor PBI was a significant violation of trust. Regrettably, CalPERS failed to handle the PBI contract or the breach with transparency and competently. Moreover, recent revelations about CalPERS seeking another no-bid, sole-source contract with a vendor named Socure have raised alarming concerns.

Contrary to CalPERS' claims, Socure does not hold the FedRAMP certification, as stated in a recent phone meeting. This misrepresentation and other falsehoods in CEO Marcie Frost's letter to Assemblymember McCarty raise serious questions about accountability and fiduciary responsibility. CalPERS must be held accountable for its misleading statements.

Equally troubling is the revelation that CalPERS intends to continue making substantial overpayments to approximately 22,000 deceased members, potentially costing tens of millions of dollars. We find it perplexing that more cost-effective options, such as discontinuing benefits have yet to be explored. This lack of initiative is baffling and raises concerns about the organization's commitment to responsible financial management.

Furthermore, the refusal to consider secure alternatives, like sending personal data to Socure by courier instead of risking an internet breach, is deeply concerning. CalPERS' dismissive stance towards safe options and reluctance to heed reason is alarming and demands immediate attention.

The extent of dishonesty and lack of transparency associated with this breach is not only unprofessional but also compromises the integrity of CalPERS. These actions warrant the urgent attention of the Legislature and Governor Newsom.

I propose that we discuss this critical issue at your earliest convenience, along with Assembly Member McCarty, to ensure that the actions taken by CalPERS are thoroughly examined and addressed.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Rosemary Knox
President, RPEA

Is your current Medicare health plan still right for you?

Kaiser Permanente has more Medicare health plan options for CalPERS retirees to choose from, with the addition of Summit.

- Care from the comfort of home when you schedule a phone appointment with a Kaiser Permanente doctor.¹
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To learn more call us toll-free: **1-855-717-9598** (TTY 711), 7 days a week, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.



1. When appropriate and available. 2. If you have a medical emergency, call 911. 3. Meal service is for 4 weeks and is available only once per benefit year immediately following an inpatient stay at a hospital or nursing facility. Kaiser Permanente is an HMO plan with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in Kaiser Permanente depends on contract renewal. You must reside in the Kaiser Permanente Medicare health plan service area in which you enroll.

Please recycle. 1215239726_RPEA October 2023





Another year passed even faster than the one before it; a phenomenon that seems to accelerate as we age. I plan to slow this year down by finding a slow-moving cruise ship that finds its way to quiet, exotic places that

won't let you move at the speed of urban U.S. life. If it's a nice ship, I might just stay on it for a while and slow my life down for an even longer stretch of time. Probably wishful thinking but it's an intriguing thought. That's enough fantasy land for now - so back to business. I do want to say that, in December, Chapter 4, my chapter, held its annual Christmas lunch and it was very successful – a great turnout, good food, good short speeches, and great camaraderie.

In January, CalPERS took a different approach to its usual off-site meeting and included a stakeholder forum where many important pension fund and health care topics were presented in depth. We first heard from Marcie Frost, CEO of CalPERS, who stated that the current funded status of the PERF (our pension fund) was 74% which is an increase of 2% from July 1, 2023; this is a reflection of positive U.S. stock market activity during the latter half of 2023. I mention this because it was stated by a CalPERS investment manager that CalPERS now has 75% present of its global equities (stocks) in U.S. stocks – important because during the past decade, U.S. stocks returned better ROI (return on investment) than non-U.S. stocks. During much of this period, CalPERS had 25% of its stock holdings in U.S. stocks and 75% in non-U.S. equities. Unfortunately, CalPERS, with too much of its stock portfolio in non-U.S. stocks, experienced a poorer ROI for its equities than most of the other U.S. public pension funds in the period 2017 to 2022; when the stock market doubled in value. With this correction in the balance between U.S. vs. non-U.S. stocks, we should expect better results from CalPERS as the stock advances during 2024. So far, in 2024, the U.S. stock shows signs of strong growth. Let's hope we see the PERF funded status at 80% + in 2024 and keep on growing.

It was the stock market that got the PERF to 100% funded and higher in many years prior to 2008. Right now, the ten-year ROI at CalPERS is 6.1% - that's 70 basis points (0.70) below the current discount rate of 6.8% (the target, annual ROI). This means that contracting agencies and active employees are paying more in normal costs than would be due had CalPERS performed better in its investment practices over the past 10 years. With the average discount rate for public pension funds now at 7.2%,

CalPERS has a serious obligation to 'up their investment game' to, at least, reach its current discount rate.

The January 'off-site' program continued with a discussion on climate change and all of the efforts CalPERS is engaged in to advance corporate compliance along with initiatives to get a stronger commitment from commercial enterprises to reduce CO2 emissions. Oil companies are the focus of much of the effort to move faster in developing renewable energy infrastructure and innovating in non-CO2 energy sources. The year 2030 is targeted for many accomplishments in CO2 reduction with CalPERS investing up to \$100 billion, by then, in climate related efforts. Climate initiatives are paying off - the U.S. experienced a drop in CO2 emissions by 2% in 2023.

The program continued with a segment on DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion), in which CalPERS is heavily committed to advance this cause. The CalPERS plan calls for implementation of DEI through internal talent management, health equity, supplier diversity and investments which are the components in the effort to deliver DEI objectives.

In the afternoon, we heard a discussion about OHCA (Office of Health Care Affordability) which is a collaboration between CalPERS and Covered California designed to reduce cost and enhance health care delivery. As you may be aware, California is now producing some generic drugs and is finding other ways to cap costs in HMO's and hospitals and expand coverage in underserved communities. Better and expanded primary care moves us toward overall better health outcomes.

On January 17, the first hour of the forum was devoted to networking with CalPERS Board members and staff. This gave stakeholders an opportunity to speak informally with leaders in CalPERS and get detailed information about programs and policies and express their views about CalPERS' successes and where improvements might be made. I got some interesting and valuable information about CalPERS' private equity (PE) initiatives from the new PE investment manager, Anton Orlich. It was a good networking experience.

Al Darby

RPEA Vice President



As we begin the new year we find we are getting ready for a busy year in politics with a primary on March 5 and a major presidential election and statewide election on November 5.

I find the ballot on March 5 to be confusing as it does not delineate between the major parties and lumps all the candidates on one giant list, therefore you must look for your preferred candidate to vote for in some races. This is because Californians voted to only send the top two candidates to the general election in November thus one could see in some cases two Democrats running for the same office as we did in 2018 when Diane Feinstein ran against Kevin De Leon for U.S. Senate. Some state assembly races saw two Democrats while others two Republicans. Usually smaller party candidates do not make the ballot in November. This system was approved by voters with Proposition 14 in 2010. It does not include presidential or party officer races, you will still get a ballot based on your party or a ballot for non-party preference (declined to state/independent voter). If you are registered as the later you will not get a ballot with presidential candidate unless you choose to vote in the Democrat, American Independent or Libertarian parties. If you are no party preference and wish to vote in the Republican, Green or Peace and Freedom parties you will need to re-register or receive a provisional ballot when you vote in person. California has the largest number of delegates in both major parties. Democrats candidates will win delegates by congressional seat lines while the winner of the Republican Party will get all the delegates from California.

The legislative session has just begun and we are preparing to look at all the new bills introduced and follow those that are still active. A number of bills that did not get out of their house of origin by the end of January are considered dead but many more bills are in the hopper including a few by the RPEA Legislative Committee. In addition the committee will be looking towards the election and deciding whom to endorse.

The RPEA Legislative Committee only recommends endorsement of candidates who support defined benefit pensions and retiree healthcare benefits. The committee interviews those candidates who seek our endorsement and makes recommendations to the RPEA full board of candidates regardless of party. The LAO/IEC which distributes our political action committees (PAC) and distributes funds to candidates based on recommendations. The PAC also donates to CalPERS candidates.

The Legislative Committee is comprised of state, local government and education retiree members. This year we will interview a number of candidates and make our decision.

The RPEA political action committee has three separate accounts: a recently formed small contributor PAC; a large contributor PAC and an independent expenditure committee PAC. What is the difference and why did we do this? A small contributor PAC can only accept donations of less than \$200 a year while a large contributor PAC can take larger donations. A small PAC can donate up to \$9,700 per election (primary and general) while a large PAC can only donate up to \$4,900 per election. Most of the major donors in elections have small contributor PACs which left RPEA at disadvantage in CalPERS elections. Independent expenditure committees can raise and spend as much as they want as long as the candidate they support is not involved in their decisions. In the last CalPERS election nearly \$700,000 was spent on one candidate.

The RPEA legislative committee is encouraging anyone who would like to donate small amounts (under \$200) to designate them to the small committee PAC.

Update on HR 82 by Rep. Garret Graves of Louisiana and S 597 by Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio to eliminate the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO), HR 82 has over 300 bipartisan co-authors in the house of representatives and S 597 has 50 bipartisan co-authors in the Senate including both Senators from California. As I have written in the past the WEP/GPO has hurt those public employees and their families for decades as they do not receive the full Social Security that they have earned in their lifetimes. There have been efforts to eliminate these provisions each congressional session for decades. Recently Rep. Graves held a hearing in Louisiana that was well attended and brought encouragement to retiree groups, however neither bill has been heard in a congress. Some congressional watchers believe it will have a tough time as the house has difficulty passing any bills that will cost more money and it is estimated that these bills could cost nearly two billion more over the next 10 years. Fingers crossed but don't get your hopes up.

BEWARE of paid signature gathers asking you to sign their petitions to put another proposition on the ballot for November. They will tell you anything to get you to sign and will lie to you if they think it will get you to sign. A ballot initiative may look innocent enough but down the road could make it easier to put initiatives to cut your pension or health benefits on the ballot. Yes there are groups out there that are envious of public pensions and benefits. Read up on the issues and ask questions. The RPEA Legislative Committee is here to help and will answers your ballot questions.

As always be safe and stay healthy, and happy trails till we meet again.

Randall Cheek
RPEA Director of Legislation



Aaron Read

California 2024-25 BUDGET OVERVIEW From Aaron Read and Patrick Moran



Pat Moran

Governor Gavin Newsom released his proposed 2024-25 California state budget on January 10, projecting a \$38 billion shortfall that is notably smaller than Legislative Analyst Office's estimate of \$68 billion released

last month. The governor proposes to close the budget gap through the use of reserves, delays or deferrals of spending authorized in earlier years, and spending cuts. The \$209 billion General Fund spending plan would protect many investments made in prior years.

The projected budget shortfall is primarily the result of state revenue collections that the administration now projects are \$44 billion lower over the three-year budget window (fiscal years 2022-23 through 2024-25) than was anticipated when the current-year budget was enacted last June. The extent of this revenue drop only recently became clear because filing deadlines for the 2022 tax year were pushed from April 2023 to November 2023 by the IRS. The shortfall reflects the steep stock market decline in 2022 — after significant growth in 2020 and 2021 — that negatively impacted income tax collections from high-income Californians and corporations, as well as the economic dampening effects of the Federal Reserve's interest rate hikes.

Closing the Budget Gap. Overall, the proposed budget closes the \$37.9 billion budget gap as follows:

□ **Reserves - \$13.1 billion.** The budget draws down reserves (\$12.2 billion from the budget stabilization fund and \$900 million from the safety net reserve).

■ In addition, \$5.7 billion is withdrawn from the PSSSA to maintain expenditures for K-12 schools and community colleges.

□ **Reductions/Pullbacks - \$8.5 billion.** The budget reduces spending for various items across the three year period, including:

- Various Climate Reductions (\$2.9 billion)
- Various Housing Program Reductions (\$1.2 billion)
- State Vacant Position Funding Sweep (\$762.5 million)
- School Facilities Aid Program (\$500 million)
- Student Housing Revolving Loan Fund Program (\$494 million)
- Legislative Requests (\$350 million)
- University of California Los Angeles Institute of Immunology and Immunotherapy (\$300 million)
- Middle Class Scholarship Program (\$289 million)

□ **Limited Revenue Generation and Borrowing - \$5.7 billion.** The budget increases revenue from various sources and borrows internally, including:

- Increasing the Managed Care Organization Tax Support for Medi-Cal (\$3.8 billion)

■ Conforming to Tax Cuts and Jobs Act Net Operating Loss Limitation (\$300 million)

□ **Funding Delays - \$5.1 billion.** The budget delays funding for multiple items and spreads it across a three-year budget period beginning in 2025-26, including:

- Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (\$1 billion)
- Full Implementation of Department of Developmental Services Provider Rate Reform (\$613 million)
- Preschool, Transitional Kindergarten and Full-Day Kindergarten Facilities Grant Program (\$550 million)
- Clean Energy Reliability Investment Plan (\$400 million)
- Behavioral Health Bridge Housing Program (\$235 million)
- Vulnerable Community Toxic Clean Up (\$175 million)

□ **Fund Shifts - \$3.4.** The budget shifts certain expenditures in the 2022-23 and 2023-24 fiscal years from the General Fund to other funds, including:

- Various shifts to the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (\$1.8 billion)
- State plans retirement contribution reductions using Prop 2 Debt Repayment Funding (\$1.3 billion)
- Unemployment Insurance Interest Payment (\$100 million)

□ **Deferrals - \$2.1 billion.** The budget defers obligations to the 2025-26 fiscal year, including:

- June to July Payroll Deferral (\$1.6 billion)
- University of California and California State University Deferrals (\$499 million)

The Governor's proposal of a budget for the 2024-25 fiscal year begins the annual budget process, during which the Legislature will review and analyze the Governor's proposals, engage with the Administration and the public regarding the state's resources and priorities, and then negotiate a final budget with the Governor after the May Revision. The budget must be passed by June 15, 2024 or the Legislature will not be paid.

State Retiree Health Care Benefits. The budget proposes \$375 million Proposition 2 debt repayment funding in 2024-25 for the employer's share of contributions to pay for future retiree health benefits.

State Employees' Retirement Contributions. The Governor's budget proposes \$6.9 billion (\$3.5 billion General Fund) as the statutorily required annual state contribution to California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) for state pension costs in 2024-25.

State Retiree 100/90 Health Care – the 100/90 formula is intact and fully funded.



Happy New Year, RPEA members, and welcome to 2024!

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season. We had a great turnout at all the Chapter's Holiday membership meetings.

During December, I enjoyed reaching out to numerous chapters. It feels good to stay in touch with our members.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to all the members supporting RPEA's mission. I would also like to thank our chapter's leaders for their commitment and exceptional leadership. Their support towards their chapter's activities has strengthened RPEA's goals and membership in their respective areas.

As we enter a new year, I am excited for new opportunities for growth and expansion of our membership. I am confident that we will have another successful recruitment year due to the latest initiatives rolled out last year. I want to express my sincere gratitude to all the members supporting RPEA's mission. A significant focus for our chapters this year will be on membership, recruitment, and retention.

Our Call to Action for this year is recruitment. Please help spread the word about RPEA, its mission, and the benefits of joining the organization. You can encourage your friends and family members to apply by carrying a few applications with you or printing them from the RPEA website. You never know who might be interested in joining. Our website contains the latest RPEA news that you can print and share. To access the website, please click on this link: <http://www.rpea.com>

Please let your Chapter President or Area Director know if you find any events where we can attend or to set up a table to make RPEA's presence known. Additionally, notify your chapter leaders and our Community Involvement Chair, Loran Vetter, if any members of your chapter receive awards or are involved with other organizations. We can attend those events together and connect with other organizations. Some organizations may not be aware of the benefits of being a member of RPEA, and by attending these events, we can help many people in need of assistance. Remember, our strength lies in our numbers.

It is possible that some organizations and members may not know how RPEA can help them protect their benefits or obtain insurance benefits provided by AMBA. RPEA offers many affordable policies, and new members can take advantage by joining RPEA or contacting RPEA headquarters. I have helped a member of Chapter 1 and

another from Chapter 22 obtain dental and vision insurance and a Long-Term Care Policy. These members were so happy with the information I shared. Remember, you never know who might need help, so please inform others about the benefits of being an RPEA member.

Dec 4, Chapter 1 Holiday General Meeting.

Chapter One was pleased to sponsor CHIPS for KIDS. All Chapter members were invited to participate by bringing unwrapped gifts for children aged 0-12.



Dec 13, Chapter 44 General Chapter Meeting,

Steve Lacey, Area V Director installed the new Chapter Leaders at that luncheon. Congrats to Alice Alexandre, Shirley Wofford, Vi Comia, and Deborah Stokes. Chapter 44 partnered with Ronald MacDonald House. All members brought personal care items, which were inventoried and delivered to the Ronald McDonald House in Loma Linda.



Chapter 7 General Meeting at Pasadena



I met with Walter White, the Past Chapter President along with Vic Thomas and Michael Warner from the membership team and Area Director Steven Lacey. The meeting agenda included discussing how to fill current chapter leader vacancies.



Dec 19 Chapter 45 South Bay

During my recent attendance at Chapter 45 - South Bay, I had the pleasure of meeting Georgia Perkins, the current Chapter President, Lolita Coffey, the Chapter Secretary, and Elaine Hayashi, their Membership Chair.



January 7, 2024, Annual Melvin Jones Event

On January 7, 2024, I attended an event hosted by the District 4 LA Lions in Buena Park - Rani Kusto. She was nominated and received an award for her outstanding volunteering efforts. Rani is the Health Benefits Chair for Chapter 1 and volunteers for several organizations, including RPEA. RPEA was mentioned at that event. Congrats Rani and thank you for sharing what RPEA does for its members.



Rani Kusto and Elena Yuasa

Since we just celebrated Valentine's Day, I suggest we continue celebrating in a unique way. Let's focus on friendship relationships; shifting our attention to the importance of friendship. This is an opportunity to express gratitude and appreciation for the friendships in our lives. At RPEA, we are thankful for our members, leaders, and supporters. We appreciate all who work hard to protect our pensions and health benefits and make our chapters fun. Happy Valentine's Day RPEA members!



"Nothing liberates our greatness like the desire to help and serve."

Elena Yuasa

Director of Membership

JANUARY 2024 BOARD MEETING



R-L: RPEA President Rosemary Knox installing Gary Harm and Rachel Maziminia as Area Directors.

RPEA

RETIRED PUBLIC EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA

MISSION STATEMENT

We are active and retired California Public Employees working together to maintain and improve the quality of the lives of our members by protecting and improving retirement, medical and other benefits.

[LEARN MORE »](#)

[VISIT RPEA ONLINE »](#)



R-L: President Rosemary Knox, Margaret Brown, Catherine Jeppson, and Al Darby.

IN MEMORIAM TRIBUTE TO JERRY BOWLES

A Stalwart Advocate and stand-up guy

Retired public employee Jerry Bowles passed on December 30, 2023 after a valiant fight with metastasized cancer. Born in 1943, he was 80 years old.

Jerry retired from fire service in 1997, after a distinguished public safety career beginning as a military police officer, following in the fire service rank and file, then moving through administration, fire prevention and ending as an assistant chief for the Central Fire Protection District in Santa Cruz County. He continued his CFPD service in a risk management role for another decade, greatly benefitting the organization and its fire service employees.

California State Senator John Laird recalls “Jerry was a good friend for many years, and will remain a shining example of public service”.

Jerry began his dedicated, multi-decades long involvement with RPEA immediately upon his retirement, becoming involved with creating and supporting legislation to assist public employee retirees. His notable efforts for both the RPEA local Surf City Chapter 009 as well as the State RPEA

Headquarters were commendable. His knowledge served as a statewide resource to many, on subject matters related to health insurance, labor negotiations, legislative processes and advocating for under represented/isolated seniors statewide. Jerry remained fully informed on retiree issues and was always generous in sharing information and offering guidance to anyone seeking help.



In addition to his RPEA work, Jerry was a strong advocate in formulating and ensuring legislation for resident owned mobile home parks. His advocacy work led the battle for seniors and low-income residents statewide.

Jerry Bowles will be deeply missed. He will remain inspirational to all that knew him as a person of substance and character. Rest well in peace, Jerry, and thank you for your friendship and exemplary service.

Memorial services are private. We, as Jerry’s many friends and colleagues, extend our deepest condolences to his family. If you wish to acknowledge Jerry’s memory, donations can be made to the American Cancer Society or the American Diabetes Association in his name.

PAST PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Our new year came in with some happy news but some really sad news. We lost one of our legislative gurus, Jerry Bowles. For me, it was doubly sad as he was also a member of

my Chapter 09 in Santa Cruz so I got to know Jerry really well. When I joined RPEA, wa-a-a-y back when, the much-acknowledged legislative leader was a policy wonk named Bill Duclus. I didn’t think anyone could near his acumen, but Jerry came very close. His work was untiring on behalf of all of us.

The good news is that we live in California. Although we do get our share, hopefully, of rainy days, we also get lots of sunny days. The other good news is that our RPEA members have excellent leaders and, going into 2024, we will have a lot of work to understand the political climate that will affect us. So stay tuned.

Take care, stay healthy, and enjoy the new year.

Jo Paulson

Past President

HEALTH BENEFITS – by THELMA LAMAR



Greetings Fellow Retirees,

As we age I find it useful to identify ways that I can boost my ENERGY. Here's a few that I follow. I am not a Physician or a Health Coach and this is not a recommendation for your particular health status.

I do this to keep myself healthy:

1. I take a nap whenever I can.
2. Since I am retired, I sleep as long as I need to.
3. I am careful of what I eat: Lots of vegetables, lean Protein, avoid sodas, sugar leaded sweets, processed food.
4. I eat regular meals. Practice intermittent fasting, meditation- quiet time without digital device interferences. Use the Airplane mode on your cell phone. Do remember to turn it back on PLEASE! I may need to call you. (He he he)
5. I intentionally & mindfully commune with nature. If you are near a body of water: such as a brook, river, lake or an ocean- feel the water & the waves. BTW, this does not include your bath tub. Go for a walk, use your walker or motorized mobilizer to get out of the house. Go for a walk in the State/National Park, Smell the roses and flowers in the garden, Koi pond, listen to the water falls, or just sit under an old tree quietly & listen to the birds while noting the vegetation around you. This just might inspire you to write or paint or knit or crochet or do sculpture work, whistle, play music etc.

Foods to say YES to:

- Cruciferous vegetables- broccoli, cauliflower, dark leafy greens
- Berries- blueberries, strawberries, blackberries
- Lean meat- chicken, fish, turkey, grass fed beef

Foods you'd be smart to avoid:

- Sugar- eat berries or dark chocolate instead
- Alcohol- substitute soda with lemon, lime or Angostura bitters
- Fried foods- make baked kale chips instead
- Your food intolerances- this is individual, but typically gluten and/or dairy, nuts, eggs etc. for many people

If you come across any article that you think is important, please send it to me. I will be more than happy to discuss it with you.

Here's to a Healthy and Happy 2024!

Dr. Thelma Lamar, PhD

Director Health Benefits

VOLUNTEERISM – LORAN VETTER



Every day we read the newspaper and hear the headlines of the happenings in our country and worldwide. There is unrest in every corner and most times we shake our head, shrug our shoulders and go about our business. It all seems so overwhelming and we get

trapped in despair. I'm about to make a suggestion to move you out of that despair. Reach out to help someone else- VOLUNTEER! When you are helping someone else, your mood will lighten and you have renewed hope for the future. It helps you to look at positives, like a child's smile or the sincere thank you from someone you just gave a leg up to. It is interesting that volunteers are not involved in determining whether someone is worthy of help based on the color, creed, ethnicity, or life style. They are anxious to help the person. In the last 7 months, RPEA has participated in many volunteering activities.

The Volunteer Forms that you submit are amazing to me in the scope and range of the places in which you all volunteer. Just a few examples include emergency services, childcare, services to the disabled (adults and children), Habitat for Humanity, the Arts, and so many other places that I can't mention them all- we will definitely run out of paper. RPEA

members are doing a great job of making themselves felt and appreciated in their local communities and I am so proud of you all. Some of you even wear your volunteer t-shirt announcing your membership in Retired Public Employees Association. The more we announce our presence in our communities, the greater our chances are to re-educate people concerning the value we bring to this state.

I have recently completed a letter to the Governor discussing in some detail our contributions to the state through our Defined Pension Programs and our volunteer efforts. After it is approved for use, it will be available to anyone who wants to modify it for local use. We need to keep reminding everyone who we are and the stake we all have in California.

Now a closing thought about my opening paragraph. When we treat people with kindness and caring which we do as volunteers, we have the ability to make people in our corner of the world happier and more accepting of each other. Imagine if the whole world went on a Volunteer kick.

As always, I will close with a quote from Erma Bombeck: *"Volunteers are the only human beings on the face of the earth who reflect this nation's compassion, unselfish caring, patience, and just plain loving one another"*

Loran Vetter

Community Involvement Chair

VOLUNTEERISM HOURS TRACKING FORM

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION (Volunteers for Public Service)

In counting volunteer hours, include any of the following:

- Meals on Wheels or other Nutrition Programs
- Care Car or other transportation services for neighbors, family, friends, voters
- Hospital, blood bank, nursing home, child care volunteer
- Visiting or caring for ill or handicapped in your home or away, errands, telephone calls, shopping, yard work, mail, etc.
- Library assistance, Volunteer tutoring at the library, school, or assistance in the Classroom
- Teaching English, as a second language, to children and adults who are non-English speaking.
- Assistance with IRS, SNAP, Utility Discount on the basis of income or medical exemption forms
- Interaction and assistance with youth activities including, but not limited to, after school programs, girls and boys clubs, YMCA, YWCA, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts museum volunteer
- Community Service organizations such as: Rotary, Elks, Lions Clubs, community theater, fairs, community activities such as street fairs, county fairs, political campaigns
- Religious activities: Choir, Sunday school teaching, Church nursery oversight, Vestry, Helping Hands, preparing and serving food, music, Church Commissions, distribution of literature, and helping in service
- Charity work or assistance programs for the Homeless, Battered Women, Abused Children, Court Appointed Special Advocates Program (CASA)
- Helping with food distribution, bazaars, craft fairs
- Helping with grandchildren and other family members who need assistance while a parent is employed



RPEA-CA Gives Back

Volunteer organizations include (but not limited to): Hospitals, Law Enforcement, Churches, Unpaid Caregiving, Community Services, Meals on Wheels, Elks, etc.

Name of Volunteer: _____

Date: _____

Chapter: _____

Area: _____

State Residing: _____

Name of Organization Volunteered:

Hours Donated:

Frequency:

- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Annually

Rev. 6/6/23

Please send your completed forms to RPEA Headquarters, 300 T Street, Sacramento, CA 95811.

Not Yet A Member of RPEA? JOIN NOW!



STAY CONNECTED

RPEA MEMBERS!
WE NEED TO STAY CONNECTED NOW MORE THAN EVER!
PLEASE UPDATE US IF YOU HAVE CHANGED YOUR
E-MAIL OR PHONE NUMBER OR HAVE MOVED.

TO UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION, PLEASE
EMAIL RPEAHQ@RPEA.COM



BENEFITS STILL FIT?

CONSIDER ADDITIONAL INSURANCE COVERAGE

As your life changes, consider some of these benefits and discounts from **RPEACA & AMBA**:

- Dental & Vision Plans
- Long Term Care & Home Health Care Insurance
- Medical Air Services Association (MASA)
- Cancer, Heart & Stroke, Accident, and Disability Insurances
- Medicare Solutions
- Final Expenses Whole Life & Guaranteed Acceptance Life Insurance
- Annuity
- Start Hearing, Inc.
- Hospital Stay Coverage
- Discounts on Travel, Dining & more

Learn More: **1-877-556-4582**

myambabenefits.info/rpeaca

RPEA of CA - Retired Public Employees' Association of California



Joining RPEA Helps Us Support YOUR Retirement Security

RETIRED PUBLIC EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA

Membership Application



Have a scanner app on your smart phone?

Visit our website: www.rpea.com

Join online!



Become a Member in Three Easy Steps!

STEP 1: Tell Us About Yourself

Your Name: _____ Date of Birth ____ / ____ / ____
 M F
 Spouse Name: _____ M F Date of Birth ____ / ____ / ____
 Is your spouse an additional applicant? Y N
 Address: _____
 City/State/Zip: _____
 Phone: (____) ____ - ____ Email: _____
 Retired From: _____ Retirement Date: _____
 RPEA Chapter Number or Name if Known: _____
 Referred By: _____

STEP 2: Select One Membership Type

- Retiree (CalPERS Annuitant) Beneficiary (Beneficiary of a CalPERS retiree)
 Affiliate (Still working for a Public Agency) Associate Member (Supporter of RPEA's goals)

STEP 3: Select One Payment Method

Option 1: MONTHLY CALPERS DEDUCTION: I authorize the California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS) to deduct for each applicant on this form \$5.00 per month from my retirement allowance until revoked by me in writing. **Only available if one applicant is receiving a CalPERS retirement payment.**

 Signature Social Security Number or CalPERS ID + Last 4 of SSN

Option 2: CHECK OR MONEY ORDER: As payment for the first year's dues, I have attached a check or money order for \$60.00 (\$30.00 for affiliate membership) for each applicant on this form. I will be billed annually for subsequent renewals.

Option 3: CREDIT CARD AUTHORIZATION: As payment for the first year's dues, I authorize \$60.00 for each applicant on this form (\$30.00 for affiliate membership) to be charged on my credit card. I will be billed annually for subsequent renewals.
 Card Number: - - -
 Expiration Date: / CVV/CVC: (3 Digit code on the back of card)
 Automatic Renewal _____
 Signature

Why Join RPEA?

RPEA protects the interests of retirees at the state level to ensure your retirement remains secure. We retain a professional lobbyist who represents our interests before the Governor, Legislators and CalPERS Board. We also have access to a federal lobbyist who keeps us informed on federal retiree issues.

RPEA continues an active and ongoing relationship with CalPERS by serving on their Advisory Committee concerning CalPERS plans and proposals. We also monitor every CalPERS committee and frequently testify at these meetings on behalf of our members.

Every RPEA member receives a bi-monthly statewide newsletter with general information as well as legislative and health care updates.

Members also gain access to numerous member-only benefits including dental and vision plans and a wide array of merchant discount programs. For only \$5.00 a month you get even more back in benefit savings!

RPEA
Headquarters Office:
(800-443-7732)

THANK YOU for Joining RPEA!

Information collected on application will be used for membership purposes only. For details, contact HQ at 800-443-7732.

RPEA/April/2023

Return your completed application to:
RPEA • 300 T Street • Sacramento, CA 95811-6912





RETIRED PUBLIC EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA

300 T Street Sacramento California 95811

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