

Retiree

CSEA

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NEWSLETTER



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Council 5015 spreading holiday cheer Retirees calling fellow members to brighten their days

by Shannon Carr

Norma Pyle is leading an effort with members of Greater Sacramento Valley Retiree Council 5015



Norma Pyle

to spread tidings of comfort and joy this holiday season to its 387 members. As council secretary, she developed a quick script, divided names in blocks of 10 and delivered the information to members who

want to participate. They will start calling 100 people and go from there.

The reason? Just to let retirees know that the union cares about them, ask how they are managing during this time, let them talk and share any assistance or resources they might need, including letting them know about the meeting that was held on December 5. Doing these phone calls also allows the council to make sure the information they have on file for its retirees is up-to-date and accurate.

“A lot of our people who are by themselves, lonely, they start getting a little depressed,” Pyle said. “This way, you can cheer their day, you can connect with somebody else and let them know that somebody really does care out there and we’re in the same situation you are.”

She said this is especially important because they are retired and COVID is playing a large part in their lives.

“We need to keep in touch with each other, especially now that we’re

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being isolated the way we are,” Pyle said. “It’s just these four walls. So, having someone touch base with you makes a difference.”

She said while this project is one that is starting during the holidays, they plan to continue it year-round as long as participants stay interested.

“We were all amazed at how many people really appreciated having someone just call and see if they were OK, we cared.”

The idea for the outreach came when Pyle and about a dozen fellow retiree members reached out to CSEA brothers and sisters during the wildfires this fall with other staff members, led by CSEA’s Member Benefits Department.

“We were all amazed at how many people really appreciated having someone just call and see if they were OK, we cared,” she said. “It’s not something that takes a lot of time. It’s not something that is real difficult and you don’t all have to gather at one time to do it. So that’s what got us to do it.”

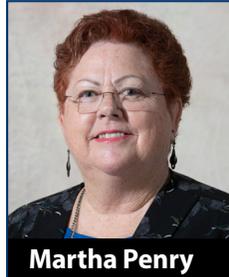
Pyle said the benefits are two-fold as reaching out can make you feel useful and happy because you are brightening others’ days.

“If you’re going to participate in the program, do it because it’s going to make you feel good,” she said. “Don’t go in with the idea that you’re going to save this person. It’s just because you want to touch somebody else for just a moment.”



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Retiree volunteers staying active this winter



Martha Penry

The end of the year tends to be a time when active people like us begin to make plans for building connectivity in the future. Connectivity is the theme of my message to you during this winter season.

I want to see us build out our team by starting small and providing opportunities for all retirees to get to know all of us as simply humans. Your board is working hard and this should help you feel trust in our actions.

We are working on many ideas to ask you to stay active with your Retiree Council/district while staying safe from this virus. I am so excited by the future and hope this makes you excited. My hope is that you are so excited that you will reach out to other retirees to recruit them to join the CSEA Retiree Unit.

2021 is the 30-year anniversary of the Retiree Unit and we are going to celebrate! The CSEA state board and Association President Ben Valdepeña have joined us in our excitement and will be participating in our events! I am looking forward to connecting with retirees and members alike! We are currently planning some fabulous activities, but you will only know about these activities if you have a current email on file with CSEA. Help

a friend and get those emails updated. Do so by emailing memberbenefits@csea.com or calling (866) 487-2732.

You will soon see offers of a “Coffee chat on Zoom” with one of our benefit providers, United Insurance Partner. We will start with a celebration at our January Board Meeting on January 13 via Zoom (See more meeting information on [page 4](#).) Medicare education, the history of CSEA retirees and much more are all in the works! You don’t want to miss the activities and celebration!

We will announce events through email, so make sure you are connected to CSEA. You don’t want to miss the

activities and celebration!

I hope you make a connection to our union store for some holiday shopping. You can save 15 percent on your online order with [Harry and David](#) gifts, or 15 percent on a new subscription to [Farm Fresh to You](#). Both are great gifts ideas! My connection with my daughter will include sending her flowers with CSEA [Teleflora flowers](#) as a Happy New Year surprise, with a savings of 30 percent!

Connectivity should be the nickname for our CSEA Council 5000, our out-of-state retirees. Even if you live outside of California, you can remain a member of CSEA! With the availability of Zoom meetings, Council 5000 is completing their charter and looking for officers to elect. They are connecting to all the out-of-state

Take some time to reconnect and have some fun! It doesn't always have to be all work and no play!

members and if this applies to you, they are interested in your ideas. They plan to hold several zoom meetings per year. If you are an out-of-state retired member and looking to get active, email District A Director Carla Held, Council 5000 board liaison, for details at carla4csea@gmail.com. For more information, read an article about Council 5000 on [page 8](#).

Connectivity could also be your logging on to Facebook for the first time and joining the CSEA Retiree Facebook group page. You will find tips on your CalPERS retirement and have fun with others near and far. Join us today by looking for us at "I'm Still In CSEA Retiree".

What does your virtual connection vault look like? I will share an idea with you. Host a council meeting via Zoom and ask each person to bring a random object, award or picture to the meeting. The idea

is to have each member share a bit about themselves. Or invite pets to the Zoom and each member of your council can tell you about their comfort pet. It's a great way to build a connection and we learn so much about each other as simple humans. Take some time to reconnect and have some fun! It doesn't always have to be all work and no play!

I also want to thank those council presidents that have invited me to attend their council meetings and Regional Representatives that have reached out with an invitation to attend the RPMs. It is a very special way for me to connect with all of you and hear what you're doing and if you have any concerns. And please, don't forget to invite your District Directors to your meetings so they may make the same connection that is so important to building our Retiree Unit!

I also want to welcome our

newest council in District A, Sutter-Yuba 5057. They're now connected and doing an amazing job!

In closing, for the holidays I am thinking of something new: exploring a walk through a new park or a scenic drive to an area I have not been to. For family, we are doing a Facetime exercise class and maybe try to do a Zoom scavenger hunt with family, near and far. Although this year may take away many of our traditions, I am looking for new opportunities of joy to build new traditions and stronger connectivity of support from one another in our union.

Wishing you all a safe, healthy and happy holiday season.

I'm Still In!



Martha Penry

Martha Penry

December "I'm Still In!" video out now Episodes premiere the first week of each month

Martha Penry, chair of the Retiree Unit Executive Board, continues her new video series "I'm Still In!" with the launch of the *third edition*, out earlier this month. The mission of the series is to keep the more than 11,500 retirees across 51 councils

informed about the illustrious amount of work that is happening within the Retiree Unit.

The third episode focuses on the importance of avoiding large family gatherings with the purpose of keeping you and your loved ones safe and healthy as COVID-19 cases continue to spike. She offers alternatives to traditional holiday shopping, with deals offered exclusively to CSEA members, and ways to connect and celebrate with others in a more virtual environment. She also talks about the hard work that

is being done by those who are planning the 30-year anniversary of the Retiree Unit next year, specific committee work and the building up of Retiree Council 5000 for out-of-state retirees, among other critical information.

The "I'm Still In!" video series was created to help build connections during the pandemic while we are unable to have face-to-face meetings. Episodes release the first week of every month, so be sure to subscribe to the CSEA [YouTube channel](#) and follow us on [Facebook](#) to get the latest news and important information. View the YouTube Playlist [online here](#).



All Retiree Unit members are invited to attend the Retiree Unit Executive Board Meeting Wednesday, January 13 at 10 a.m.

As we keep our members' health and safety in mind, CSEA is not holding in-person events or meetings at this time. However, the Retiree Unit Executive Board has arranged to safely host their board meetings online via Zoom. All of the meetings are scheduled for 10 a.m. the second Wednesday month (except in July, which will be held on a Monday) as follows:

- January 13, 2021
- March 10, 2021
- May 12, 2021
- July 7, 2021
- September 8, 2021
- November 10, 2021



What is Zoom?

Zoom is an app you can download on any computer, smartphone or smart tablet at no cost. Zoom allows

you to both see and hear the presenters and their PowerPoint presentation. It also allows you to use a "chat" feature to ask questions in real time.

How do I set up my Zoom account?

Go to zoom.us today to sign up for your free account. [Download](#) and test Zoom by going to zoom.us/test and follow the instructions.

How do I attend the RUEB meeting?

You must be an authenticated Zoom user (see set up above) and pre-register to attend this virtual meeting by clicking on [this link](#).

After you have pre-registered, and once your CSEA membership has been verified, you will receive an email with the Zoom link and information to join the meeting. We look forward to your participation.



Photos by Charr Crail

Roy Hartnell new District I Director by Shannon Carr



Roy Hartnell

On Election Day, the Retiree Unit Executive Board announced Roy Hartnell, of San Luis Obispo Council 5018, as the new District I Director. His installation follows the other Board officers being put in place as the final order of business at CSEA's 94th Annual conference on July 21. Hartnell's term will last until the end of conference next year as he is finishing out the term of Jennie Batiste, who passed away in the spring.

As a friend of Batiste, Hartnell admits that he was always amazed at watching her work and her dedication to the position which he got to experience firsthand as they often took trips together.

"I'm just really honored to be taking her place. I think she'd be happy with me taking this position," he said. "I've known her for decades through CSEA."

Last year, Hartnell received a 30-year pin for his service at the state level with CSEA, including Conference Committee chair for 13 years. He initially became an active member as a chapter secretary and followed as vice president, president, regional representative for Region 26, member of the Research/Negotiations Committee and a member trainer, which he was doing until COVID started earlier this year. He is also a CSEA Honor Roll member.

Hartnell shared some goals he has set for his new role, including increasing membership, getting retirees comfortable with using technology to connect through Zoom, getting the five councils he will oversee working together and encouraging active CSEA chapter presidents to include retirees in their RPMs, and

promote joining the Retiree Unit to retiring classified employees.

"I am really proud of the organization. I have seen it change throughout the years for the better," he said. "I'm happy to say



Photo by Joseph Gallagher

that I was at the conference in the late '80s where we approved the Retiree Unit and I never imagined I would number one, be old enough to be a retiree; and number two, be a part of it. There are some leaders and footprints we are trying to follow, and they left a legacy for all of us."

Calling all retirees

Volunteers needed for Retiree Unit committees

Want to turn your passion into action? What interests do you have as a retiree that you could utilize to help build the union? The Retiree Unit is looking for volunteers to participate in different committees and activities.

One such committee is the

Recruitment Committee. It operates under the mission that it is the responsibility of all retirees in leadership to recruit more members into the Retiree Unit. This group focuses on best and new techniques to capture members as they leave the school district to see the advantage of staying in CSEA.

We also have many other committees, including the Special Project Committee. Participating in the committees will allow you to make connections with former coworkers, generate ideas to get more members and offer help to contact others, among some of the many duties. To find out more information or to sign up, contact RUEB Chair Martha Penry at mpenryrueb-chair@gmail.com.





Tips to help you prepare for filing taxes

As the new year approaches, it is time to start gathering receipts for filing taxes. Your tax situation can change from year to year. When you are retired, you may want to adjust the federal or California state withholding amounts deducted from your monthly CalPERS check.

There are a few ways to change your tax withholding on your CalPERS retirement check.

- **Mail/Fax:** Complete a tax withholding election form and mail or fax it to CalPERS.
- **Online:** Login to your [myCalPERS](#) account, then select Tax Withholdings from the Home tab. You can follow a step-by-step guide [How to Change Your Tax Withholding](#) (PDF) on myCalPERS or contact CalPERS directly at (888) 225-7377.



If you need help completing the Tax Withholding Election form, call (888) CalPERS (888-225-7377).

While CSEA and CalPERS cannot provide tax advice, you can contact your tax consultant, the [Internal Revenue Service](#), and/or H&R Block.

Sara Riddle, District General Manager for San Joaquin County with H&R Block, offers the following recommendations:

1. Don't forget to take the RMDs (required minimum distributions).
2. Remember to pay taxes as you take distributions.
3. Know how your Social Security benefits are taxed.
4. Keep track of your medical expenses in case you can claim a deduction.
5. Schedule your FREE Second Look, Consultation or Mid-year assessment to review your situation early and regularly. As a CSEA member, you can have year-round tax planning free of charge by contacting (800) HRBLOCK (472-5625).

CalPERS payment will be posted January 4

Are you set up for direct deposit for your monthly CalPERS benefit? If so, you should know that January's payment will post January 4. Direct deposit posts the first business day of the month after the monthly benefit is issued. Although the December 2020 monthly benefit is issued on January 1, 2021, the first business day of the month is January 4, 2021.

IRS regulations require that no more than 12 monthly payments can be issued in a calendar year, and no more than one payment can be issued in a month. These dates are posted for the calendar year through [myCalPERS](#). You can also view these dates on the Pay Days page of the website. You can review or change your direct deposit in your myCalPERS account.

DON'T HAVE A MyCALPERS ACCOUNT?

[myCalPERS](#) You can find the form for Direct Deposit Authorization (PDF) on the website, as well as more information about direct deposit. You can also call the CalPERS Customer Contact Center at 888-CalPERS (225-7377) for assistance.

CalPERS Pay Days through 2021

Here are CalPERS pay days to prepare for the rest of this year through 2021. Benefits are paid at the beginning of the month for the previous month's benefits. For tax reasons, your December retirement check is always dated

the first day of the new year. The [State Controller's Office](#) issues checks and determines mailing dates. If you have [direct deposit](#), contact your financial institution to see when funds are placed in your account.

2021 Pay Dates:

Benefit Month	Southern California/ Out of State Mail Date	Northern California Mailing Date	Direct Deposit Date
December	December 29	December 30	January 4, 2021
January	January 28	January 29	February 1
February	February 25	February 26	March 1
March	March 29	March 30	April 1
April	April 28	April 29	April 30
May	May 27	May 28	June 1
June	June 28	June 29	July 1
July	July 28	July 29	July 30
August	August 27	August 30	September 1
September	September 29	September 30	October 1
October	October 28	October 29	November 1
November	November 29	November 29	December 1
December	December 30	December 31	January 3, 2022

The State Controller's Office distinguishes Northern and Southern California using ZIP codes:

- Southern California is between 90000 through 93599
- Northern California is between 93600 through 96199

Retiree Unit focused on building up Council 5000

by Shannon Carr

Many CSEA members may move out of state after they retire, but even so they maintain at least five points of connection to California. First and foremost is their union, followed by their CalPERS pension, former coworkers, family, and politics or legislation that can impact their benefits.

“If CSEA ceases to exist, their benefits will disappear. If there are cuts to education, there’s less money going into the PERS funds and therefore it affects their pension,” said Past President Allan Clark. “There are all kinds of things. Just take an issue and spin it.”

It is for this very reason that Council 5000 was established: to give out-of-state CSEA retirees representation. The process was never completed to establish a fully functional council, however they got one step closer during their December 14 meeting with the installation of officers by RUEB Chairperson Martha Penry. They were Clark as President, Bill Regis as Vice President and Charlotte Brothwell as Secretary/Treasurer. As next steps, the officers’ paperwork will be submitted to the Retiree Unit Executive Board for signatures and certifications.

“This is historic,” Clark said. “To

be a pioneer at our age is kind of cool.”

Next up, they will also be submitting a resolution to change the constitution and bylaws to get a district director seat on the RUEB and act as an entirely virtual council.

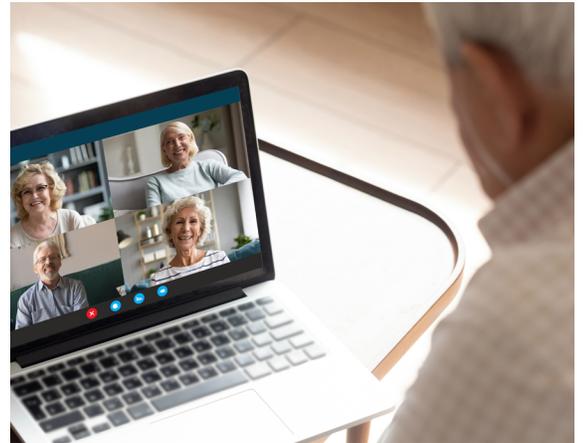
“We have a resource here that we feel could be valuable not only to the states that they’re in, but to California as well,” Clark said.

This evolution is the brain-child of Steve Araujo, former Association President, Life Membership honoree and retiree, who started talking about creating a more established council a couple years ago with Clark, both members of Council 5000.

Araujo and Clark are now working with Council 5000 Liaison Carla Held, RUEB District A Director, and the rest of the Retiree Unit Executive Board in making this happen.

“We’re not assigned to any particular district. There’s no direct representation on the Retiree Unit Board for us,” said Clark, who now lives in Louisiana.

The onset of new technology CSEA has been using will allow for more effective outreach and engage-



ment with out-of-state retirees and Clark anticipates the Council will be fully functional by this time next year.

“The advent of Zoom is kind of what gave us this organizing tool or the opportunity to reach these members,” Clark said. “This is kind of what caused the genesis, so to speak, as to being more in earnest about doing something.”

They recently held a meet and greet for the Council to start the interest process on November 20th and their December 14th meeting included officer nominations. Submitting a resolution to get a district director won’t be possible until conference next year.

“The council itself will probably be growing before we get all of it done, but I’m putting a realistic timeline of a year to really get it up and running and functioning like it should be,” Clark said.

Council 5000 has 1,400 potential out-of-state retiree members, which



Allan Clark



Steve Araujo

It is for this very reason that Council 5000 was established: to give out-of-state CSEA retirees representation.

would make it the second largest council in CSEA if they were all to join.

“In the future, we want to have a district director who could attend the meetings and be a representative,” Clark said. “Because we have some density in some states like Nevada, Arizona, Oregon and Washington, if there were enough members where they could form a council of their own, then we’d have a process for doing it.”

Having the council in place would allow for a source of volunteers for phone banking for CalPERS elections, elections in California and even some that are out of state.

For example, this year, Araujo worked on

Mark Kelly’s successful campaign in Arizona for U.S. Senate. This was a major win for CSEA as Kelly stands for organized labor.



“We have taken what we learned in CSEA and have applied it to the communities we live in all across America,” Clark said.

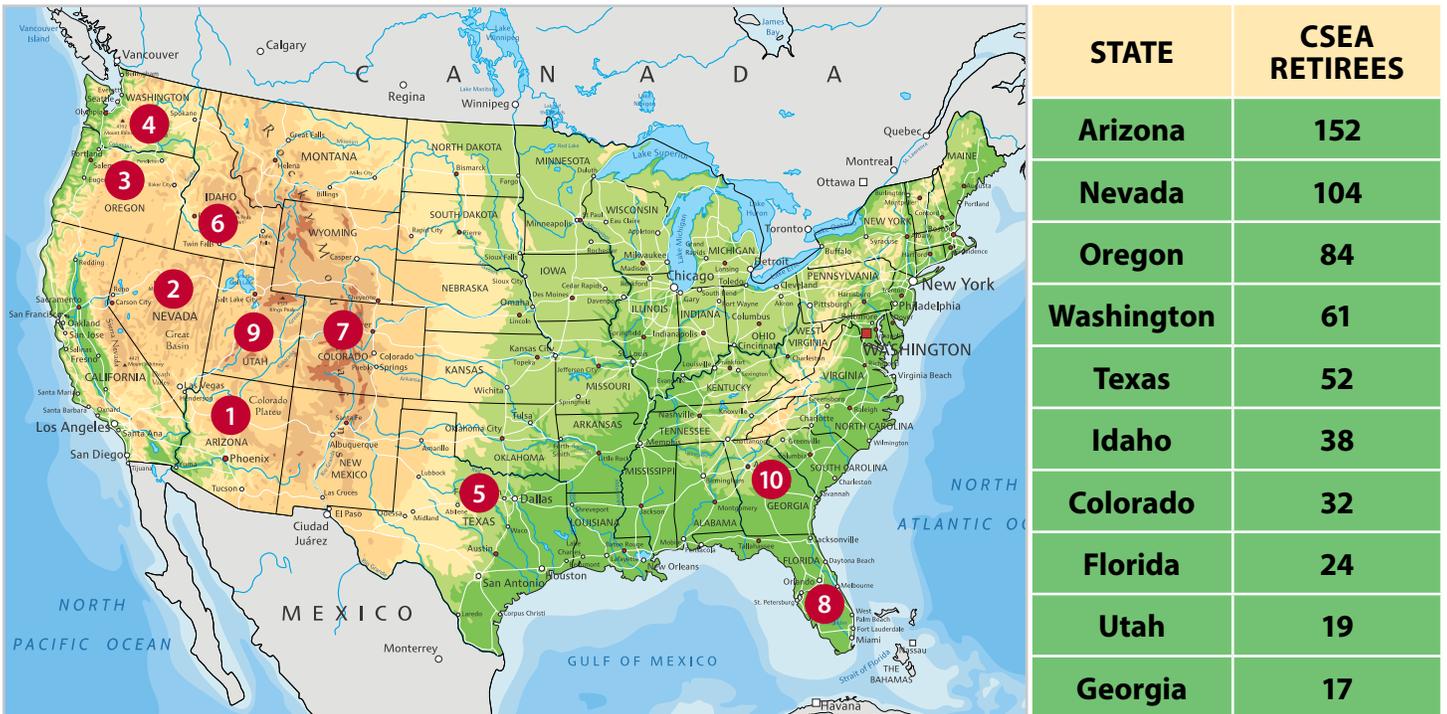
Clark emphasizes that growing Council 5000 is important for those retirees who live out of state to keep them connected to CSEA programs.

“There’s no reason because they’re virtual that they shouldn’t be able to participate. They have a value to CSEA still and to its members,” he said. “We want to engage them in that process so that they can still participate and have a say about their pension and other things that affect their lives.”

If out-of-state members are interested in getting involved, email Carla Held at carla4csea@gmail.com.

“There’s no reason because they’re virtual that they shouldn’t be able to participate.”

TOP 10 PLACES CSEA RETIREES RELOCATE IN THE UNITED STATES



election 2020

Retirees play a key role in 2020 election, help shape their future

by Shannon Carr

This year's election marked a monumental turning point for the U.S. with 161 million people participating, the highest of any presidential election in our nation's history. As the polls opened on Election Day, more than 100 million Americans had already cast early ballots, far surpassing and nearly doubling the 47 million early ballots cast in 2016.

CSEA-endorsed President-elect **Joe Biden** won the presi-



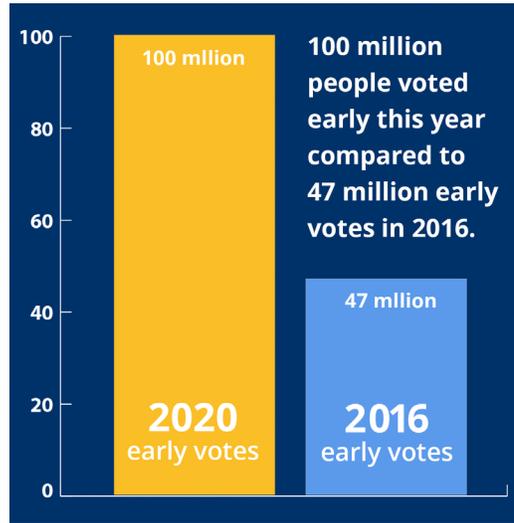
dency with more than 74 million votes, garnering more votes than any presidential candidate in American history.



Senator **Kamala Harris** was chosen as the first ever woman, first Black person, first Indian American and first Asian

American elected to the second highest office in the United States.

With so much at stake in this election, record numbers of people stepped up to volunteer as well. This included our very own CSEA members, retired and active alike, who understand the importance of supporting pro-labor candidates. Electing such candidates, from local school boards to the state and federal levels, ensures our voices are echoed when decisions are made on issues that



affect retirees and classified workers, such as education funding, layoff protections, and safe reopening protocols.

Nearly 1,000 retirees and members, plus staff, participated in campaign efforts for CSEA-endorsed candidates and Prop 15. This included 893 volunteers placing more than 221,000 calls during phone banking alone in support of targeted local candidates and ballot measures, and to increase voter turnout all the way through to Election Day. These CSEA volunteer efforts and our organization's independent expenditure efforts were instrumental in the success of many CSEA-endorsed candidate races, including those below:



East San Jose native **Dave Cortese** will soon serve as senator representing California's 15th District after earning 54.33 percent

of the votes over incumbent Senator Ann Ravel. Cortese has been a champion of organized labor in every position in which he's held office and is also a part of a long line of labor supporters, including his father. He has worked directly with CSEA members, especially when he was a school board member at the East Side Union High School District and, while there, he fought for better working conditions and benefits and made sure that everyone knew the value of the classified staff.

Former senator and Democratic challenger **Josh Newman** earned a seat in the 29th California State Senate District by receiving 51.5 percent of the votes over incumbent Senator Ling Ling Chang. This was a must-win seat as it was a rematch against Sen. Chang. Newman's motto is simple: "Do the work, tell the truth, and stand up for what you believe in." When Newman was in the State Senate in 2016, he had a 100 percent voting record on CSEA's priority legislation. This is a huge legislative win for CSEA as he has been a strong supporter of our members and the work that we do.



Native Californian **Dave Min** earned a seat in the 37th California State Senate District by garnering 51.2 percent of the votes cast over incumbent Senator John Moorlach.



He has devoted his career to the goal of building an economy that works for people of all backgrounds. As a young lawyer at the Security and Exchange Commission, as a policy director at the Center for American Progress, and now as a law professor at UC Irvine, he has fought to protect hard-working Americans by making our economy

and our markets operate better and more fairly for everyone. Getting incumbent Sen. Moorlach out was a victory, as he has been a constant opponent of pensions and labor values. CSEA's efforts in this campaign involved outreach to the entire legislative district. Min

recognized CSEA's involvement as so important for the outcome that he personally called and thanked the Governmental Relations team.

Susan Eggman earned the open seat in the 5th California State Senate District with 57.1 percent of votes cast against challenger Jim Rid-enour. This was a must-defend seat and her victory was in large part due to the groundwork that was paved in the primary election earlier this year. Throughout her many years of service, Eggman has stood up for equal pay for equal work and has worked to provide solutions to help Californians access quality, affordable healthcare. Since being elected to the State Assembly, she has made education, particularly higher education, a top priority. She has even attended the previous in-person CSEA Super Session event.

Assemblymember **Reggie Jones-Sawyer** earned a seat in the 59th California State Assembly District by receiving 58.7 percent of the votes cast over challenger Efen Martinez. This was a must-defend seat as he is a rock-solid supporter of labor and education, unlike his opponent, who was aligned with the business

community, previously serving nine years as the Executive Director of the Florence-Firestone/Walnut Park Chamber of Commerce. When the

Nearly 1,000 retirees and members, plus staff, participated in campaign efforts for CSEA-endorsed candidates and Prop 15.

pandemic first hit, Jones-Sawyer was instrumental in the Assembly passing SB 117 to protect compensation for school employees and to appropriate \$100 million to secure vital personal protective equipment for first responders, school employees, and other workers on the frontlines of the fight against the coronavirus. He's also fought to provide financial support to families impacted by the virus to make sure they keep a roof over their head and food on the table.

These wins represent a positive shift for labor in the Senate, which will be incredibly helpful with future legislation and could not have been achieved without the dedication of CSEA retirees, members and field staff.

"During a year when so much is already being asked of our members, I really want to thank them for giving their time to support candidates and

measures that support us," Association President Ben Valdepeña said. "They understand the importance of coming together as one to support candidates and propositions that will continue to advocate for our rights as classified employees in the future."

Additionally, the Governmental Relations team received more than 110 Political Action for Classified Employees (PACE) applications this year. Chapters that have endorsed local candidates for school board, bonds, or parcel taxes can apply for PACE funds to support those efforts. San Mateo Union High School District Chapter 519, for example, requested funds for Ligia Andrade Zuniga, who was running for the San Mateo Union High School District Board of Trustees,

and received \$1,900 for that campaign effort. She earned one of the two open seats available, receiving

36.55 percent of the votes cast.

Being involved from the very beginning in making sure endorsed candidates, bonds and propositions pass gave members the opportunity to have an impact about who will become the decision makers in their districts and ensure those elected

officials have an interest in schools, the students, community, and staff they will serve.

To stay up-to-date with the latest election results, visit www.csea.com/election.

"During a year when so much is already being asked of our members, I really want to thank them for giving their time to support candidates and measures that support us."

— Association President Ben Valdepeña



Ligia Andrade Zuniga received a check for her campaign effort from a PACE application this year.

Photo courtesy of San Mateo Union High School District Chapter 519

Be an angel this holiday season: Donate to Granny Grants scholarship



by Shannon Carr

The best presents don't come wrapped, but are instead found in good will, generosity and service to others. Be an angel this holiday season and contribute to Granny Grants (CSEA's scholarship program for grandchildren and great grandchildren of members) or select a holiday gift for others with funds going directly to the cause. There are a number of different items available in the Granny Grants vault that you may want to learn about, including assorted greeting cards, jewelry, pins, pin holders, key holders and the popular food cozies. You can also donate directly to the fund by contacting Member Benefits at (866) 487-2732.

Tammy Shafer-Noriega, a member of the Granny Grants committee, Regional Representative for Region 93 and member of Lynnwood Sentinels

"We know it's not going to help pay off debt but if we make it a little easier somewhat for our grandchildren and great grandchildren, that is the reason we do it."



Photo courtesy of Paula Pelton

Retiree Council 5019, said fundraising has been much different this year with the challenge of everything shifting to an online environment.

In the past, they have had booths at the annual conference where they could sell items or collect donations in addition to fundraising at their in-person council meetings. This year, Paula Pelton raised money through a raffle for a quilt. They made a PowerPoint

advertising all the items they have (such as the popular cozies, which they started selling four years ago), and sending it to others to share in the hopes of getting the word out and raising funds. Additionally, they recently revitalized the Retiree Facebook page and hope to share updates with you soon through social media. Come Paraeducator Conference in March, they are hoping to be able to share more opportunities to donate.

Noah Whittiker, grandson of Val Pharr of Council 5019, has received the scholarship twice, including in Fall 2018 and the following Spring. He is currently a freshman study-



Photo courtesy of Vall Pharr

Noah Whittiker, grandson of Vall Pharr of Council 5019, has received the Granny Grants scholarship two times. Here he is at his graduation from Cabrillo High School in Long Beach with both of his grandmothers.

ing acting at DePaul University in Chicago through distance learning while he resides in Long Beach. He received the funds while he was attending Long Beach City College and used the money to purchase textbooks, which are expensive.

Whittiker said the scholarship meant a lot to him, on multiple levels.

"My grandmother is the person who notified me of the Granny Grants and it just reminded me of the fact that she always has my back. She's the kind of person who looks for stuff like that. She just lets me know that she's always thinking

about me,” he said. “It also reminded me of how grateful I am that programs like Granny Grants exist because college is hard for some people, maybe not in terms of the work they are doing but in terms of being able to pay for it or not being able to pay for it. So that was just another resource that I was grateful to have. It really was a huge, huge help.”

Granny Grants was founded in 2003 under the name William Turner Scholarship because the Retiree Unit Executive Board decided they wanted to start fundraising. No dues money goes to the scholarship, which is funded solely by donations and fundraising. It originally started as a scholarship of \$100, then grew to \$150 and now it is generally \$250 but the amount is set by the RUEB. One winner is selected per year from each council, but the final determination is also by the RUEB.

Both grandchildren and great grandchildren are eligible for this fund, which requires them filling out an application from Headquarters and being already registered for a trade school or college. There’s no grade point average qualification.

Shafer said the cause is just as important today, if not more so, because college is growing exponentially more expensive.

“We know it’s not going to help pay off debt, but if we make it a little easier somewhat for our grandchildren and great grandchildren, that is the reason we do it,” she said.

For more information or an application form, contact Member Benefits at memberbenefits@csea.com or (866) 487-2732.

New Retiree Facebook page bridges communication divide

by Shannon Carr

With the onset of COVID-19 in March, the Retiree Unit has been finding different ways to stay connected with its members from a distance. Meetings have been held via Zoom and some councils are calling its members as outreach (see story on cover page).

Senior citizens across the United States are the fastest growing group of Facebook users, nearly doubling in numbers from 2012 and 2019, according to data from the Pew Research Center.

To help bridge the coronavirus divide, the Retiree Unit launched a new *Facebook group* page on October 31, strictly for retirees, with exceptions to the Association President and Board Members.

Susie Luna, member with San Gabriel Valley Crusaders Retiree Council 5053, manages the page, logging on an average of four times a day to handle requests. She said for someone to be accepted into the group, they must answer three questions: membership number, council number and chapter retired from. During our interview, Luna said 92 people were pending and 143 were already admitted the group. And it continues to expand after being in place for just over a month.

While Luna handles the accepting and declining of membership requests, in addition to accepting or

declining posts people want to have on the page, Dee Gudmundson and Nancy Malcolm are also moderators.

Right now, the kind of announcements people can expect to see on the page include information about upcoming RUEB meetings, fundraisers such as one for Granny Grants and anything to do with CalPERS and retirement. Luna admits that she is still learning features that are available to them but has recently discovered group chats and setting up meetings.

She encourages all retirees to join and shares the importance of doing so.

“We stay members and you need to be informed and that’s a good place to be informed,” she said. “I know a lot of people don’t do the tweeting and Instagram so Facebook is something that a lot of retirees are familiar with, easy to do and just to see it forward.”



Retiree Unit Executive Board elections

The CSEA Retiree Unit Executive Board consists of the Executive Board Chairperson, the Executive Board Secretary, and 10 District Directors, each of whom is democratically elected by CSEA Retiree Unit members to serve a two-year term. This year, elections will be held for Executive Board Chairperson, and the District Directors representing districts A, C, E, G, and I.

To qualify for a District Director office, candidates must have been members in good standing of a Council organization within the

respective District and file a letter of intent with the Executive Board Secretary postmarked no later than January 4, 2021.

To qualify for Executive Board Chairperson, candidates must have been members in good standing of Council organizations statewide and file a letter of intent with the Executive Board Secretary postmarked no later than March 1, 2021.

The Letters of Intent and advertising guidelines can be found at csea.com/internalelections.

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RETIREE UNIT MISSION STATEMENT: *The California School Employees Association Retiree Unit envisions a strong, organized program for retirees to promote communication among all retirees, to address issues that impact their lives, and to assist CSEA's active membership in accomplishing their retirement goals.*

Retiree Unit

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