



RETIRED PUBLIC EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION Chico Chapter 077

JUNE 2020 NEWSLETTER

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 our earned retirement, medical, and other benefits. RPEA represents the rank and file retired public employees.

Sharon Salcido, Editor – 893-0181 – sharonsalcidofromchico@gmail.com

Matters concerning your address should be directed to Barbara Evans – barbevans37@aol.com - 342-4783

RPEA Chapter 077 Mailing Address: P.O. Box 6415, Chico, CA 95927-6415

Chapter Website: www.rpeachapter77.com

PICNIC CANCELLED

The June 4 picnic has been cancelled due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, as it's important to keep our members safe and well. We're disappointed that we aren't able to enjoy this annual picnic that is traditionally our final event until September. Since we don't hold meetings in July and August, our next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 3. The Board will continue monitoring the Covid-19 situation; and if regulations permit us to safely have gatherings by then, we will combine a picnic with the scheduled program in September. This has been a difficult time for everyone, and we hope that all of you are staying healthy and safe while being quarantined at home. Our RPEA members fall into the senior category, and seniors are most vulnerable to serious symptoms and death from this virus. Follow all of the recommendations carefully, and stay safely hunkered down at home. Reach out to those members who are alone, as it is harder to stay sheltered-at-home when you're alone. We will beat this together!

LEGISLATIVE REPORT - By Mary Kowta

The Covid-19 virus has changed the way we live. How temporary is this change? We miss family and friends and the last-minute trips to pick up a loaf of bread or some ice cream. When will normalcy return? Some say there will be a new normal, and we ourselves will put more thought into our relationships, our actions and our guiding principles. Interesting! Maybe so...

Here in Northern California we have not experienced the ravages of the disease, thankfully. Yet many will be affected by the revised State budget. Governor Newsom has had to toss his original proposal and put forth a \$203 billion spending plan and somehow close a \$54 billion deficit. He has high hopes that the Federal government will support state and local governments, but that may be at a lesser level than what is desired. The US Senate will be negotiating more funds for big businesses and Majority Leader McConnell stated that maybe some states should just go bankrupt! Not California, of course, but some small states without healthy reserves have cause for concern. Here are just a few areas where budget reductions affect Californians: Education - the Governor wants to augment school funds by redirecting monies intended to prepay pension liabilities.

Higher Education - 10% reduction in State support for both CSU and UC. New budget will support 2 years of free community college. Health Care - Medi-Cal recipients will see fewer health care services. Public employees - State workers could see a 10% pay cut, depending on State/union negotiations.

While the calculations put forth by Governor Newsom seem to be an accurate picture of a dire situation, there is always another view, and Dan Walters (CalMatters, 5/17) suggests that the Governor maximizes the gaps in funding for political reasons. Walters points out that the Legislature's budget analyst finds the deficit at manageable levels. Maybe the truth lies somewhere between the two!

LEGISLATIVE REPORT (Continued)

One news item that will not endear the Governor locally is his proposed cut to funds for PID.

We will miss our June picnic! Maybe we should give a little support to a local restaurant and get some take-out that day to eat on our own porch or back stoop----thinking of RPEA friends! Stay safe, stay healthy!

Two new books for the bird watchers:

"What it's Like to Be a Bird, From Flying to Nesting, Eating to Singing--What Birds are Doing and Why" by David Allen Sibley (Knopf)

"The Bird Way: A New Look at How Birds Talk, Work, Play, Parent and Think" by Jennifer Ackerman (Penguin Press)

HEALTH BENEFITS REPORT – By AI Raitt

CalPERS Covid-19 Update, Health Plan responses, and Open Enrollment.

At the May 14, 2020 Stakeholders meeting at CalPERS headquarters in Sacramento, there were three agenda items particularly relevant to the general membership: A Covid-19 update provided by Dr. Julia Logan (a physician recently hired as the CalPERS medical consultant) and presentations regarding health plan responses to the pandemic and the timelines for the upcoming open enrollment. Dr. Logan noted that the curve for the infection rate in California has recently trended downward, and the epidemiologists are trying to predict what this could mean for the overall infection rate in our State. In the US, there were 1.4 million confirmed cases and 84,140 deaths. In California there were 71,150 confirmed cases and 2,934 deaths. Los Angeles had the highest rate per capita in the State although there was considerable variability in some regions compared to others. The testing, tracing, and isolation approach has helped to decrease the rate of new cases. A new public-private partnership has resulted in the establishment of 80 testing sites Statewide, and testing can now be done in some pharmacies. The president of Blue Shield is the chair of this task force.

Three types of tests are now being used: 1) PCR (the "nasal swab") with results about current infection in 1-2 days; 2) the antigen test developed by Abbot Labs giving results about current infection in minutes; and 3) the antibody test which gives results in minutes about whether or not a previous infection has occurred. Results turn positive about two weeks after an infection begins. How long someone with a positive antibody test has immunity is not currently known.

Much has been learned about this virus in the last two months. A person who has been infected but is not yet showing symptoms (the "asymptomatic" phase) can be "shedding" virus and infecting others without knowing it. The immune systems of children and adults react differently. It takes about a thousand viral particles to become infected (editorial note: for additional information about viral particles and their role in infection, there is a good article at: <https://www.erinbromage.com/post/the-risks-know-them-avoid-them>. Below this post is another link regarding "flying.")

Health plans have begun incorporating coverage for Covid-19 treatment. The hold on non-emergent procedures was lifted in mid-April for some procedures such as aortic valve replacement and colonoscopies. Increased safety protocol procedures will be used between each case. There has been an overall increase of virtual visits from approximately 15% to 80%. CalPERS staff have been working with OptumRx to keep medications flowing including increased use of the mail-order option.

The Open Enrollment period this year will be from September 21 to October 15. On August 3 the health plan rates and evidence of coverage will be posted online at the CalPERS site. On September 14 health plan statements will be mailed to the approximately 100,000 retirees who still get this info via regular mail, and this same info will be made available on the "MyCalPERS" website. There will no longer be use of the cell phone app since all info and ability to change plans can now be done through the "MyCalPERS" site. The "search" function of this site will now include specialists.

I've developed a new personal mantra which I'm wishing for all of you this summer: SITMOU - - *"Sanity in the Midst of Uncertainty."*

"Although it might be a scary time, COVID-19 has made everyone slow down and spend more time with family."