



Starting the New Year:

2010, no matter what you believe, will bring us a lot of challenges. 2009 brought a lot of challenges with the District's budget crisis, the required rate increase, attacks on all public employee pension plans, a contentious attempt at health care reform, and a general public perception that public employees are contributing to the down turn in the economy. Over the next several months the chapter Executive Board will be investigating various strategies for the 2011 negotiations. As we gather more information, that will be communicated to the membership throughout the year. We'll try to provide links to internet sites where you can learn more of what is happening throughout the labor movement. Some of these links we will endorse for both their content and detail. Others that support radical change simply to play on emotional response or political positioning we will also identify.

This is an election year. California has an open election where propositions can make the ballot. This year Public Employee Pensions will be attacked by two proposals designed to reduce the multiplier for newly hired public employees. I have included a couple of links to these propositions which now appear to have gained enough signatures to be placed on the November Ballot. Please take time to review them and understand the long term impact that these proposals may have. The first link below is an initiative to reform the California public employee pensions and retirement. The link is from the California Secretary of State (CA SOS) and is a good link to the initiatives that are either qualified for the ballot, cleared for circulation pending qualification or have failed to qualify.

<http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/ballot-measures/cleared-for-circulation.htm>

This is the link to the CA SOS website showing the initiative on public pensions and retirement:

http://ag.ca.gov/cms_attachments/initiatives/pdfs/i873_initiative_09-0076.pdf

1434. (09-0076)

Reduces Public Pension and Retirement Health-Care Benefits. Initiative Constitutional Amendment.

Summary Date: 01/14/10 | Circulation Deadline: 06/14/10 | Signatures Required: 694,354

Proponent: Marcia Fritz (916) 966-9366

For peace officers, firefighters, public safety, and other public employees hired after July 1, 2011, this measure: reduces pension and retirement health-care benefits; increases minimum retirement age; restricts early retirement; increases minimum age and years of employment needed for retirement health-care benefits; and limits post-retirement pension increases. For current and new public employees this measure: prohibits retroactive increases in retirement benefits and requires public employers to make annual payments for future benefit costs. Allows public employers to adjust retirement contribution rates for new employees in future labor agreements. Summary of estimate by Legislative Analyst and Director of Finance of fiscal impact on state and local government: **Major reductions in annual public sector pension costs—potentially in the range of 50 percent or more-over the long run. Possible increases in other public employee compensation costs, depending on future decisions made by governmental entities and voters. Major near-term increase in annual governmental payments to prefund retiree health benefits, more than offset in the long run by annual reductions in these costs.** (09-0076.) (Full Text)

Right now it is fashionable for our Governor, Legislature, and even some members of the EBMUD Board of Directors to lay the brunt of the economic downturn on the back of public service employees. Joe Young has written an excellent article, included below, which talks about how public employee pensions are viewed. Joe also gives us some ways that we can help reverse some of those perceptions.

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Health care also remains under attack. As part of the Senate's Bill to Reform Healthcare, so called Cadillac Plans will be taxed. It is unknown how they will be taxed but the amount varies depending on the value of the plan. This value can be based on all included forms of healthcare, vision and dental. The IFPTE has asked that we contact our Senators and Representatives and express our concerns about this TAX. Recently the AFL-CIO negotiated a stay of this tax until the final bill became law in 2013. This site explains the position of the major unions on the taxing of so-called "Cadillac Plans."

<http://www.cnn.com/2010/POLITICS/01/14/health.care.negotiations/index.html?hpt=Sbin>

The District is cutting costs by not filling vacancies as staff retire or change jobs, reducing work out of class opportunities, and cutting travel and training. These cutbacks will affect all of us as well as increase our work loads. Each of us accept temporary tasks that often require extra hours but it is essential to understand that sometimes the work load is overwhelming even though it appears that it is short-lived. Once those temporary tasks become permanent it is often difficult complete the total job or to get adjustments in compensation for the now permanent tasks. The Executive Board needs to be informed when your position is directed to assume additional duties without appropriate consideration of the practicality of the increased work load.

Recommended Websites:

IFPTE Local 21: <http://www.ifpte21.org/index.shtml>

EBMUD Chapter: http://www.ifpte21.org/chp_ebmud.shtml#aa

International IFPTE: <http://www.ifpte.org/index.htm>

Pension Watch: <http://www.pensionsunami.com/>

California Secretary of State (Elections and Initiatives): <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/>

Holiday Luncheon:

I want to say thank you to all the members that attended the December 3 Holiday Luncheon. We have had a fairly interesting year with the budget situation and changes in our normally operating structure to save our rate payers money. The chapter has grown increasingly larger this year and the E-Board hopes to cross the 200 member barrier in 2010 which will give this chapter another delegate to Local 21. You all give some food and money to the Alameda Community Food Bank for the holidays which will make some less fortunate families a little happier this season for giving.

I want to thank Dean Coate (President, Local 21), Bob Muscat, (Local 21 Executive Director), Bob Britton (Local 21 Director, Field Services) and Pat Hendl (Vice President, East Bay) for their comments and work that they have accomplished throughout the year.

H1N1 Vaccinations:

The District will not be offering H1N1 vaccinations for staff directly but Kaiser and Health Net now have vaccine available for covered members. The restrictions in place while the vaccine was in short supply have been lifted making it available for the general public. Please consider getting your immunization through your health care provided.



Take Home Vehicle Privilege:

The District as of May 29, 2009 eliminated vehicle take home privileges for almost all staff. With the exception of some emergency first responders and limited staff that were on standby this privilege has been reduced significantly. Now that it has been almost nine months, we have seen some of our members who were grandfathered having their vehicles restored as a result of the Unions grievance process. Additionally some District employees have gone through their managers and justified having this privilege restored. The District has a process within the Fleet Management Procedure 709 under "Take Home Authorization" for staff to request this privilege from their Division Manager providing adequate justification exists. If you have had this privilege eliminated please review the procedure and if appropriate, submit a written request to your Division Manager for restoration of the privilege. (See extract below)

Extract of District Procedure 709 – Fleet Management

Take-Home Authorization

The following outlines the criteria to be used to justify take-home authorization of District equipment:

- The position requires jobsite reporting to a non-District owned, operated or rented location on a routine basis (90 percent of days employee is reporting) directly from home.
- Such jobsite reporting requires the employee to transport equipment or tools of a non-administrative nature to or from that reporting location. When the jobsite criteria above are satisfied for the duration of an individual capital project, and it is cost effective to do so, temporary take home authorization can be granted for the duration of the project. Cost-effectiveness justifications must consider distance of the jobsite reporting location from the project trailer or other District facility. Reporting to a jobsite trailer does not in and of itself constitute jobsite reporting. Any new approvals for take-home authorization predicated on jobsite reporting, or on reporting to multiple District facilities, will be contingent on up to 90 days of data being collected by log or Automated Vehicle Location unit confirming that such assignment meets the criteria of this section.
- When response to a District site to procure a vehicle (with specialized equipment) would significantly delay response to emergencies. Division Managers shall recommend take-home vehicles for personnel who meet the criteria outlined below:
 - Employees who are on call and being compensated with paid standby to serve as first responders to off-hours operational events. Authorization will be for the duration of the on-call shift.
 - Employees with immediate-response assignments (compensated or uncompensated) during official warnings. Authorization will be for the duration of the official alert/warning period.

Division Managers who recommend take-home equipment authorizations shall submit written justification on a Vehicle Assignment (Form X-016) to the Director of Operations and Maintenance whenever such assignment is made and annually thereafter for each vehicle.



Public Employee Pensions: Joe Young

I recently attended a seminar on public employee pensions provided by Californians for Health Care and Retirement Security. CHCRS is a collection of unions working statewide to develop research and facts in preparation for responding to the expected initiative attack on public pensions. The following is a summary of some of the points from the seminar.

Pensions and the Public Perception

The pension battle is about to begin again. There will likely be at least one ballot measure aimed at public pensions on the upcoming ballots this year.

The legislators are quick to blame the ills of government on us, the worker. Especially since their popularity is at an all time low. The papers excel at trumpeting the evils of public servants, (teachers, nurses, utility workers firefighters, and peace officers) who expect a fair wage and an adequate retirement as compensation for the expenditure of their life's labor to provide public services.

The Good News is: polls have shown little shift in an overall favorable out look on public compensation and pensions for teachers, nurses, utility workers firefighters, and peace officers.

The Bad News is: positive public opinion is at a plurality and the majority outcome at any election can easily be swayed by a few headlines and the deflective ranting of a few legislators eager to deflect a careful examination of government and their job performance.

You must effectively advocate the realities around public pensions to assure that the slim percentage margin that will decide the ballot measures knows the truth and can see through the hype that will be pushed by the media and ineffective legislators.

These are the facts:

The economic crisis was brought on by the Wall Street executives and corporate abuse is the real threat to retirement security for ALL Californians

- Pension funds were almost fully funded until the recent stock market crash.
- All retirement plans, public and private, have been hit hard by the economic crisis
- Teachers, nurses, utility workers firefighters, and peace officers should not have their retirements put at risk due to corporate abuse while banks and financial executives receive bailouts and bonuses.

Teachers, nurses, utility workers firefighters, and peace officers work hard every day providing public services, earn fair wages and contributing to their own pensions.

- The average public employee retirement benefit is about \$2000 per month
- 70% of public employees receive retirement income of less than \$30,000 per year and most do not receive social security
- 80% of the cost of retirement benefits is paid by employee contributions and investment earnings.
- Like everyone else, teachers, nurses, utility workers firefighters, and peace officers deserve security and dignity in retirement

Cutting retirement of public employees will do nothing to solve our budget problems.

- Retirement costs represent an extremely small fraction of the state budget
- Taking retirement benefits away from teachers, nurses, utility workers firefighters, and peace officers will do almost nothing to help our budget problems

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Opportunistic politicians are using the national crisis to blame California teachers, nurses, utility workers firefighters, and peace officers for our economic problems rather than putting responsibility where it belongs – on Politicians, Wall Street and the Impact of corporate excesses on stock market performance.

- The state should find other ways to cut costs, like eliminating waste and fraud instead of balancing the budget on the backs of those who provide services like teachers, nurses, utility workers firefighters, and peace officers.