



The Peralta Retiree

April—June 2007

Vol. 3 No. 1

<http://www.peraltaretirees.org>

From the President...

by Jerry Herman, PRO President

Reimbursement Blues? Whose?

Many retirees who were members of SEIU 790, Operating Engineers 39, or non-academic administrators were informed in a District Benefits publication three months ago that your Medicare reimbursements might come to an end. That news caused a small firestorm of worry and confusion. Without getting too technical, the alarming situation arose because the language in the PFT contract, which specifically called for the Medicare reimbursement, was, through oversight, not included in the other union contracts. Hence, other retirees were not technically entitled to it. The error was corrected by the PCCD Board on February 6 with a resolution that mandated the Medicare reimbursement for everyone.

Problem solved – no reimbursements missed...but wait. Whose problem was it? It was implied that somehow Peralta retirees whose union contracts did not include the necessary language would be on the hook for Medicare charges, and that got a lot of folks worried. After all, weren't we virtually mandated by PCCD to sign up for Medicare when we reached sixty-five to save the district lots of money? So why should retirees have to pay for Medicare without getting reimbursed? Well, the worry wasn't necessary because it would not have been retirees responsible for payment, it would have been PCCD since our benefits are guaranteed at no cost to us. Peralta would have been required to pick up the total medical bill for any covered service without 80% of it being paid by Medicare. You wouldn't have owed a dime. The district should have made that clear to retirees, but it wasn't clear at all. Had it been clear, maybe unnecessary spikes in Peralta retirees' blood pressure levels would not occurred and

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PRO Reviews CoreSource SPD — Requests Changes

by Bruce Jacobs, PRO Vice-President

Last fall the PCCD mailed all Peralta retirees covered by the CoreSource PPO a copy of the new CoreSource Summary Plan Description (SPD). The SPD provides information about the benefits that retirees are entitled to, and is the guide used by CoreSource to determine the level of benefits that they provide when a retiree submits a claim. At the direction of the PRO Board, the PRO Health Benefits Committee has been reviewing the SPD to determine if it accurately reflects the same level of benefits as that provided by Blue Cross prior to the change in administrators in 2004.

The process of determining equivalence has been complicated by the fact the District has not been able to produce a definitive SPD from the time that Blue Cross served as the District's health benefits administrator. However, after careful scrutiny of the new document, the PRO Benefits Committee has determined that there are numerous areas in which the new benefits are reduced when compared to the benefits under Blue Cross. The Committee has pre-

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The Peralta Retiree is published four times a year by
the Peralta Retirees Organization (PRO)

Volume 3 Number 3

IN MEMORIAM

The following Peralta retirees have passed away during the last months. PRO extends our deepest condolences to their families and loved ones.

Isham (Ike) Buchanan

Susan Duncan

Although not a Peralta retiree, many PRO members will remember

Jeff Kerwin

Jeff taught part-time in Laney's English Department and was instrumental in the part-time faculty lawsuit.

*If you have any information about the passing or the serious illness of a Peralta retiree, please contact Bruce Jacobs at:
webmaster@peraltaretirees.org
or by writing to PRO, PO Box 1951, El Cerrito, CA 94530.*

What Teachers Make

By David Jack, English Department Chair Pitman HS

The dinner guests were sitting around the table discussing life. One man, a CEO, decided to explain the problem with education. He argued, "What's a kid going to learn from someone who decided his best option in life was to become a teacher?" He reminded the other dinner guests what they say about teachers: "Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach."

To stress his point he said to another guest; "You're a teacher, Bonnie. Be honest. What do you make?" Bonnie, who had a reputation for honesty and frankness replied, "You want to know what I make? (She paused for a second and then began...)

Well, I make kids work harder than they ever thought they could.
I make a C+ feel like the Congressional Medal of Honor.
I make kids sit through 40 minutes of class time when their parents can't make them sit for 5 without an iPod, Game Cube or movie rental...

You want to know what I make. (She paused again and looked at each and every person at the table.)
I make kids wonder.
I make them question.
I make them criticize.
I make them apologize and mean it.
I make them have respect and take responsibility for their actions.
I teach them to write and then I make them write.
I make them read, read, read.
I make them show all their work in math.
I make my students from other countries learn everything they need to know in English while preserving their unique cultural identity.
I make my classroom a place where all my students feel safe.
I make my students stand to say the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, because we live in the United States of America.
Finally, I make them understand that if they use the

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Bills Introduced To Repeal Social Security Penalties on Teachers

The following article has been adapted from an article in the January 2007 California Retired Teachers Association (CRTA) publication STRS Watch which is available online at www.calrta.org.

California Congressman Howard Berman (D-LA) and Howard 'Buck' McKeon (R-Santa Clarita) wasted no time in the new Congress in renewing their efforts to repeal Social Security's financial penalties on teachers and other public workers.

They jointly introduced H.R. 82, the Social Security Fairness Act of 2007, on the first day of the new Congressional session. The bill was introduced with an impressive 103 cosponsors.

"Thousands of dedicated firefighters, police officers, teachers and other public servants are deprived of a portion of their Social Security benefits each year as a result of the onerous Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), said Rep. McKeon.

The GPO and the WEP substantially decrease Social Security benefits to public employees who paid into state or local pension systems in lieu of Social Security even though those employees may qualify for Social Security benefits based on non-public service employment. For example, the individual may qualify based on covered private sector employment prior to their public service work or from part-time or temporary work while they were employed in the public sector.

Rep. Berman cited the penalties' impact on attracting mid-career professionals to teaching, particularly in the critical math and science areas because those potential teachers would lose social security benefits.

"We can help our school districts recruit valuable teachers if we can eliminate the GPO and the WEP," Rep. Berman said.

This is the fourth time Representatives Berman and McKeon have introduced repeal legislation. Their

previous effort garnered more than 300 cosponsors before the end of the Congressional session.

Past efforts to move the bill through Congress, however, have stalled because of the opposition of the Republican Party leadership. Democratic leaders are more sympathetic to repeal.

"We applaud the ongoing efforts of Congressmen Berman and McKeon to keep this issue before their colleagues and continue to push for repeal," said CRTA President George Avak.

Literally tens of thousands of carefully planned retirements have been devastated by the unintended consequences of the WEP and GPO.

On the Senate side, longtime repeal advocate Sen. Dianne Feinstein has also introduced a bill to repeal the WEP and GPO. S. 206 has numerous cosponsors.

Express Your Support for H.R. 82 and S. 206 by contacting:

Senator Feinstein	415-393-0707
Senator Boxer	415-403-0100
Rep. Barbara Lee	510-763-0370
Rep. Ellen Tauscher	925-932-8899

More information available at:

CRTA Action Center: www.calrta.org

Service Committee Establishes PRO Scholarship Fund

Please Contribute To The Pro Scholarship Fund By Honoring Or Memorializing A Friend Or Loved One

You can make a contribution to the PRO Scholarship Fund in honor of an occasion, in memory of someone or in honor of someone. The honoree or honored occasion or person in whose memory the contribution is made as well as the contributor will be acknowledged in the next newsletter . Also, a card acknowledging the contribution was made in the honor or memory of someone will be sent to the person you direct.

Please complete the form below and send the completed form with your check made out to **The Peralta Foundation—PRO** to: PRO Scholarship Fund, PO Box 1951, El Cerrito, CA 94530.

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Yes, I want to support the PRO Scholarship Fund with a contribution.
(Please print)

In honor of: _____

On the occasion of: _____

In memory of: _____

Please send acknowledgement card to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Contributor's Name: _____

Contributor's Address: _____

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Make check payable to: **The Peralta Foundation—PRO**

Send to: PRO, PO Box 1951, El Cerrito, CA 04530

Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by federal and state law.

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(**SPD Review** Continued from page 1)

pared a list of requested changes to the SPD. PRO President Jerry Herman and PRO Health Benefits Committee Chair Alex Pappas submitted the list to the District on March 8 and requested a meeting to discuss the PRO proposals for later in the spring.

Some of the issues identified by PRO include: elimination of payment for out-of-network routine care, increased co-payments for emergency care when a visit to the emergency room is deemed a non-emergency, and inclusion of more procedures

covered under the \$250 maximum for a routine physical exam.

If you have identified any discrepancies between your coverage under Blue Cross and your coverage under CoreSource, please contact PRO (by sending the information to PRO, PO Box 1951, El Cerrito, CA 94530) with a description of the problem and a description of any documentation you can make available (for example Explanation of Benefits forms from Blue Cross showing coverage).

If You Travel, Don't Leave Home Without It!

by Michael and Margaret Mills

As a traveler, you know it can happen.

You're in Texas visiting the grandkids or you're in Thailand visiting your Peace Corps daughter or you're in Turkey walking through millennia of history and suddenly you fall prey to the traveler's worst nightmare—serious illness, injury or both. Now what do you do?

Peralta's Health Care Policy has defined limits. Within the US, air or ground transportation will take you from the "...place of injury or serious medical incident to the nearest hospital where treatment can be given." Subsequent transportation is covered "only from the initial hospital to the nearest hospital qualified to render the special treatment." What if the nearest qualified hospital is NOT your own hospital? Who pays to transport you home?

Internationally, Peralta provides for reimbursement for "covered expenses;" but what if you don't trust the medical facility or the ones nearby, regardless of their stated qualifications, and want to come home but are not stable enough to fly commercially? Who pays to charter a properly outfitted plane to bring you home for safe medical treatment?

The answer in either the domestic or international scenario is likely to be YOU, and the bill can be ghastly. Medical Evacuation, as this form of transportation is known, costs upwards of \$20,000 for coast-to-coast travel. Internationally, costs nearing six figures are not unusual.

Rather than chucking your travel plans or gambling that nothing untoward will happen, we strongly suggest you invest in Medical Evacuation coverage. It's remarkably cheap, fills the gaps in Peralta's coverage, protects your pocketbook and provides peace of mind.

In our investigations, we found two reputable com-

panies that provide Medical Evacuation coverage--*MedjetAssist* and *AirMed*. A third, *Travel Guard*, is not user friendly due to its many contingencies. *MedJetAssist* charters or leases medically outfitted planes as needed, while *AirMed* has its own fleet of four aircraft. We use *MedJetAssist* (full disclosure, Margaret, an RN, believes so strongly in Medical Evacuation coverage that she is a part-time sales rep for the company). You can check the websites of both companies for more detailed information.

The basic rules for Medical Evacuation require that you be hospitalized at least 150 miles from home, be medically stable for transport, have an accepting doctor in your hospital communicate with the staff who is familiar with your problem, and be in a location that has an airport or be able to be transported to an airport that is safe for crew and patient. Activation of the program will vary, but the average time for mobilization is four hours. If medically stable, you decide on the destination hospital in the event of a medical evacuation. There should be no exclusions for adventure travel, terrorist acts or natural disasters and no dollar limits for repatriation and specialty hospital transports.

Rates vary according to the type of membership (individual or family), the length of membership (7 days to 5 years), and the length of trips (up to 90 days and beyond 90 days). For *MedjetAssist*, the ANNUAL rate for trips up to 90 days for an individual to age 75 is \$225, while the family cost is \$350. Plans are also available for those between the ages of 75 and 85. For an organization like PRO, *MedJetAssist* would give a discount if three or more sign-up. Contact Margaret at mills48@comcast.net for further details on *MedjetAssist*.

Either *AirMed* or *MedJetAssist*, the choice is up to you. Medical Evacuation coverage — don't leave home without it. Take care. May all your travels be safe ones.

Medicare Part B - Premiums & Income Level

by Alex Pappas

In the past, Medicare B premiums were the same for everyone. Persons enrolling after age 65 paid a penalty of 10% for each year of "late" enrollment, *i.e.*, A person enrolling at age 68 would pay the age 65 premium plus a 30% penalty for the rest of his or her life.

Now, however, the law that affects Medicare B premiums has changed. Income is now a variable in the premium equation. A person's modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) influences the B premium. The MAGI is the total of your adjusted gross income and certain forms of tax-exempt income, most often tax exempt interest. As your MAGI changes each year, your B premium is affected accordingly (see table).

Commencing with your 2005 MAGI, your B premiums are increased if you filed a joint (*i.e.* married) tax return, and your MAGI is over \$160,000, or you filed as a single person and your MAGI exceeded \$80,000.

That's the bad news. **The good news is that PCCD is obligated to pay our entire B premium including the income level surcharge (if any).**

You might think this will never apply to you because of the relatively high income level thresholds

(What Teachers Make Continued from page 2)

gifts they were given, work hard, and follow their hearts, they can succeed in life.

(Bonnie paused one last time and then continued.) Then, when people try to judge me by what I make, I can hold my head up high and pay no attention because they are ignorant...

Want to know what I make? I MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

What do you make?"

Submitted by Alex Pappas

before the surcharge applies. Maybe not. However, even if ordinarily you do not have sufficient income for the surcharge to apply, it might in a year when you sell your home if you have a large capital gain.

Filing Status	MAGI range (in \$000's)	Monthly Surcharge
Single, Head of Household, etc.	\$80-\$100	\$12.30
	\$100-\$150	\$30.90
	\$150-\$200	\$49.40
	More than \$200	\$67.90
Married, Filing Jointly	\$160-\$200	\$12.30
	\$200-\$300	\$30.90
	\$300-\$400	\$49.40
	More than \$400	\$67.90
Married, Filing Separately	\$80-\$120	\$49.40
	More than \$120	\$67.90

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Have you renewed your PRO Membership for 2007?

Please renew your PRO membership for 2007 if you have not already done so.

Dues are: \$20-1 year, \$55-3 years, \$80-5 years, and \$250-lifetime.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Mail to: PRO, PO Box 1951, El Cerrito, CA 94530



The Laney College Family Circa 1964

Get out your magnifying glasses folks, and see how many people you can recognize.

Peralta retiree Mary Smith recently sent a copy of this rare photo to the PRO Board for inclusion in the newsletter. Many thanks to Mary!!

(From the President... Continued from page 1)

less medication (which the district pays for) would have been necessary...

Grabby Governors

Apparently California's current and last governors – seeing the more than \$150 billion in Cal STRS coffers – think that California retired faculty has more income than it needs, and can't resist making grabs at the pension fund. Gray Davis hit up the fund for a "loan" of \$500 million, which Arnold does not want to pay back. The courts have ordered the state to do so, with interest! But STRS hasn't seen a penny of that reimbursement yet.

Now Arnold has proposed a cut of \$75 million of the state's contribution to keeping retirees' cost of living increases at a minimum of 80% of inflation rates. His administration's rationale for the cut to the Supplemental Benefit Maintenance Account (SBMA), as its known, is that in exchange for the cut, the 80% minimum will become vested (meaning it will be required by law, which it currently is not). Sounds fair, no? No. The fact is that the fund has enough money to grant more than the 80%, and the projection is that it will continue to have it for years to come. That means that the cur-

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Check Out The PRO Web Site

On the PRO web site you can find:

- The current issue of the PRO newsletter as well as an archive of past issues.
- The PRO Member Directory with contact information for PRO members.
- A list of web links to resources for Peralta retirees including information about retiree health benefits.

<http://www.peraltaretirees.org>



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rent 80% could become 90% or more. If the 80% figure is vested as the state proposes, it will be frozen at that amount, meaning that no matter how much SBMA has, it will not be able to grant more than 80% of cost of living increases, so the state will want to cut its contribution back further. Subtle and slippery - and retired STRS members ultimately are the losers. Opposed by virtually all faculty and administrator groups, the governor's proposal will have a hard time getting past the legislature. You might add your opposition to the swelling chorus. If you want more information, call the California Retired Teachers Association at (800) 523-2782.

Watch your wallets, fellow retirees. Those out to pick your pocket are pretending to be your best friends.

Have a great spring. Information about a theater party at Woodminster and PRO's third annual picnic will be forthcoming in future publications.

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