



# The Peralta Retiree

## From the President...

by Jerry Herman, PRO President

### Some thoughts about collective bargaining

Last month's debacle in Wisconsin where Governor Scott Walker and a Republican legislature stripped public employees of their collective bargaining rights was a transparently cynical maneuver to ravage workers' rights and Democratic political power in the state. As many commentators have observed, public employees' collective bargaining rights in Wisconsin have nothing to do with the state's immediate financial troubles. The public employees' unions had already conceded considerable amounts in wages and benefits to help the state out of its economic doldrums. The absence or presence of collective bargaining in and of itself neither helps nor hinders Wisconsin from balancing its budget.

Walker and the newly elected Republican legislators used the fiscal crisis as an excuse to consolidate their power and diminish that of the Democrats. Why else would Walker exclude police and firefighters' unions from the collective bargaining ban? Members of those public safety unions generally vote Republican while other public employee unions support Democrats. To their credit the unions representing police and firefighters' unions stood in solidarity with other public employee unions in opposing Walker's repeal of collective bargaining and demonstrating against it.

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### Peralta's connection

What's the connection between Wisconsin public employees' collective bargaining rights and Peralta retirees? It's simply this: The reason PRO exists as an organization is to protect our most precious retiree asset, our guaranteed lifetime health benefits. How did we get those health benefits? If you haven't guessed by now, the answer is, through collective bargaining.

California public employees fought hard to gain bargaining rights. For example, faculty took a long time to achieve full-fledged bargaining. For several years in the early 1970's there existed a format called meet-and-confer in which the PFT and other faculty organizations (in Peralta's case) met and conferred with the district administration and came to non-binding agreements which the Peralta board would ratify but could modify or revoke unilaterally.

By the mid-'70's faculty collective bargaining in California became law. One organization in a school district was elected to represent faculty interests, and the agreements reached with school districts were legally binding and could not be changed without reopening negotiations.

The foundation for Peralta retirees' lifetime health benefits was laid prior to the official institution of collective bargaining, but added health benefits were negotiated with each new contract, often in tradeoff for Peralta faculty accepting minimal salary increases (or, in some years, no salary increase at all). Many of you will remember the period when for years Peralta faculty salaries sat at the bottom of the Bay Ten community college districts.

### Our hard-won benefits

Current Peralta retirees enjoy excellent lifetime benefits, earned through years of sacrificing salary increases. The key to the high quality of those bene-

*(Continued on page 2)*

**(From the President...**Continued from page 1)  
fits is collective bargaining. Without it I believe we wouldn't have achieved half of what we have. Contrary to the propaganda now being spread by Republicans, public employee unions did not – could not – dictate the terms of their contracts. Bargaining means negotiation. Ideally, it means a level playing field where one side does not have a mandated advantage over the other, and it's never easy. Just ask some of the early PFT negotiators if they could bully a district negotiator like Curt Steffens (who, by the way, in retirement is a PRO member).

My message here is that Peralta retirees earned every benefit that we have through hard, frustrating, often agonizing collective bargaining. No one "gave" us anything nor did we ram anything down the poor defenseless throats of Peralta board members.

**Do what you can**

So when you see in the coming months that Ohio or Indiana or Michigan wants to do away with public employee collective bargaining, recognize it for what it is, a naked, vicious political power play meant to prey on the fears of those victimized by a recession caused not by the middle class, the poor, or members of public employees' unions, but by some of the greediest, wealthiest and most powerful interests in American society. In support of the Wisconsin protests against abolishing collective bargaining for public employees, PRO recently contributed \$200 to the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee, which will donate funds to local candidates who oppose the assault on the fundamental right of public employees to collectively bargain. I hope that individually you, too, will support such causes.

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**Welcome New Members**

*PRO welcomes the following retirees who have recently joined.*

Saundra Henry  
Socorro Taylor  
Charles Wollenberg

**PRO T-Shirts Available**

You can order a PRO T-Shirt in your size (S-M-L-XL). The shirts are turquoise and have the PRO logo on the front



and the logo and the words "Peralta Retirees Organization" on the back. Shirts are 100% cotton. \$18 each. To order, send a check, your size, number of T-Shirts and your address to PRO, PO Box 1951, El Cerrito, CA 94530.

**OPEB Update:****Bonds Intended for Retiree Health Benefits To Be Refinanced**

*The following article by Matt Krupnick appeared in the Contra Costa Times as well as in other newspapers of the Bay Area News Group. In 2006 the Peralta District issued \$150 million worth of bonds (known as OPEB) as a strategy for obtaining funds to cover their large and rapidly growing unfunded liability for retiree health benefits. Unfortunately the market conditions have changed drastically since the bonds were issued and the bonds have become a significant expense for the District. At the March 29 Board of Trustees meeting, the Trustees instructed their consultants to bring them a plan for refinancing the bonds. Mr. Krupnick's article, reprinted below, gives the details. BJ*

**Peralta trustees vote to avoid hefty balloon payment**

*By Matt Krupnick*

Peralta Community College District trustees voted Tuesday night to move toward averting a looming \$20 million debt payment brought about by a failed investment strategy.

The board told advisers to investigate refinancing bonds meant to pay for employee retirement benefits, which would bring the balloon payment scheduled for 2015 to less than \$10 million. In exchange for the lower payments, which would begin next year, the plan will raise annual payments by millions of dollars each year over the following 16 years; Peralta would pay about \$9 million more over the next 20 years.

State budget cuts could trim up to \$17 million from the four-college district next year, and Peralta trustees were anxious about the upcoming bond payments as they try to meet student demand. More than 400,000 California students could be shut out of community colleges next year because of budget cuts, state Chancellor Jack Scott said Wednesday.

"If we did nothing, in (the 2015-16 fiscal year) we'd have to cut \$20 million from our operating budget," said Ron Gerhard, Peralta's budget chief. "That would have catastrophic consequences."

Trustees will need to approve the final decision before the bonds are refinanced.

Peralta's retirement bonds were reconfigured in 2009 to save the district money in the short term — the district deferred principal and interest payments for several years — but the strategy backfired because of the volatile market.

The fund, which will pay for retiree health benefits, has \$53 million less than it needs, Gerhard said. The shaky situation raised concern among accreditors earlier this year. "The significant unknown for the district at this point has to do with their immediate and long-term financial viability," the regional accrediting agency wrote to Peralta leaders in February.

**Want To Be Listed in PRO's OnLine Membership Directory?**

The PRO website ([www.peraltaretirees.org](http://www.peraltaretirees.org)) contains a password-protected directory of PRO members. Only retirees who have given us permission to list their information are included in the directory. If you're not already listed you can have your contact information added by emailing your request to 'webmaster@peraltaretirees.org'. (If you don't have access to email you can send your request by US mail to the PRO PO Box.) The directory can include your address, phone number and/or your email address.

If you would like to access the directory to look for someone's information you can request the password at the same email address. If you are already listed you can verify that your info is correct.

Also, if you've recently moved or changed your email address be sure to let us know so we can make sure we can reach you with information and updates.

# Get Prepared Now For The Next ‘Big One’

*Peralta retiree Les Margolies recently circulated an email with some guidelines for preparing for an earthquake. In light of recent events in Japan and New Zealand, and given that many Peralta retirees live close to major earthquake faults the Peralta Retiree is printing the guidelines to remind everyone that a ‘big one’ is inevitable and that preparing now may save your life and the lives of your loved ones.*

It is quite possible after a major earthquake that we will not have electricity, gas, or water or telephone service for many days. It is also likely that roads and freeways will be broken and it will be very difficult to leave our neighborhood. Stores may be badly damaged, without power and unable to get new supplies. It may take some days before help from outside can get to everyone. In general, neighborhood groups are *not* storing food, water, clothing, shelter or sanitation supplies. That is up to each household to take care of for itself. The California Office of Emergency Services urges everyone to be prepared to be self-sufficient-able to live for at least five days after an emergency.

## What will you need?

- Food & Water
- Cooking Equipment
- Sanitation Supplies
- Clothes and Bedding
- First Aid Kit and Medicine
- Communication Equipment
- Copies of important documents

## Where Should You Keep It?

### Go-Bag

Near or under your bed	Shoes, flash light, jacket, whistle, fire extinguisher, crow bar
In your car or your “Go-Bag”	Copies of important papers, phone numbers, shoes, gloves, clothes, radio, flashlight, money, blanket, at least 2/3 tank of fuel, food, water, first aid kit
In an outdoor shed or in a closet, pantry, garage or basement space that would be accessible if your home were badly damaged	Food, water and equipment for five days of “camping”.

Outside house	Extra car and house keys
Outside of the Bay Area with a friend or family member	Copies of important documents: wills, insurance, financial documents, etc.

Your Go-Bag should contain things you would need for immediate safety. You may not be at home when an emergency strikes so you may want to keep a go-bag in your car and/or one at work. If you have to leave your home your Go-Bag should contain what would be most essential in an evacuation.

- Flashlight
- Radio B battery operated or hand cranked
- Batteries
- Pocket knife
- Fire extinguisher(s)
- Sturdy shoes, a change of clothes, and a warm hat
- Local map
- Some water and food
- Permanent marker, paper and tape (for leaving messages)
- List of emergency point-of-contact phone numbers
- List of allergies to any drug (especially antibiotics) or food
- Copy of health insurance and identification cards
- Extra prescription eye glasses, hearing aid or other vital personal items
- Prescription medications and first aid supplies, sun screen
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Extra keys to your house and vehicle
- Any special-needs items for children, seniors or people with disabilities
- Don’t forget to make a Go-Bag for your pets

## Food

- Store food items that are familiar rather than buying special emergency food. Consider any dietary restrictions and preferences you may have.
- Ideal foods are: Shelf-stable (no refrigeration required), low in salt, and do not require cooking (e.g. canned fruit, vegetables, peanut butter, jam, low-salt crackers, cookies, cereals, nuts, dried fruit, canned soup or meats, tuna, juices and non-fat dry milk).
- High calorie snack food, granola bars, trail mix, etc.
- Instant coffee, tea, cocoa mix, powdered lemonade
- Mark a rotation date on any food container that does

# Bay Area Overdue for Large Earthquake

not already have an expiration date on the package.

- Rotate canned goods, etc. annually (on your birthday?) Give to a food bank.
- Include baby food and formula or other diet items for infants or seniors.
- Include pet food.
- Store the food in airtight, pest-resistant containers in a cool, dark place.
- Most canned foods can safely be stored for at least 18 months. Low acid foods like meat products, fruits or vegetables will normally last at least 2 years. Use dry products, like boxed cereal, crackers, cookies, dried milk or dried fruit within six months.
- After a power outage, **refrigerated food** will stay cold longer if you keep the refrigerator door closed. Food should generally be **consumed within 4 hours**. **Food in the freezer** will normally remain safe for 2 days.

## Water

In a disaster, water supplies may be cut off or contaminated. Store enough water for everyone in your family to last for at least three days, better to have enough for five days. Store one gallon of water, per person, per day. This amount will be adequate for general drinking purposes. Three gallons per person per day will give you enough to cook and for limited personal hygiene. Do not forget to plan for your pets.

Store tap water in food grade plastic containers, such as clean 2-liter soft drink bottles. Heavy duty, reusable plastic water containers are also available at sporting goods stores.

If you buy commercially bottled spring or drinking water:

- Keep water in its original container, and don't store a bottle once it's been opened.
- Label bottles with their replacement date, and store in a cool, dark place.
- Replace water at least once each year.
- A better choice is large 5 gallon hard plastic water bottles available at Home Depot.

Well sealed containers can be kept for at least a year. Date containers and store in cool, dark place. Replace soft plastic bottles within one year.

Treating water after the disaster:

If you run out of stored drinking water, strain and treat

water from your water heater or the toilet reservoir tank (except if you use toilet tank cleaners.) You cannot drink swimming pool or spa water, but you can use it for flushing toilets or washing.

Treatment process:

Begin by straining any large particles of dirt by pouring the water through a couple of layers of paper towels or clean cloth. Next, purify the water one of two ways:

- Boil - bring to a rolling boil and maintain for 3-5 minutes. To improve the taste, pour it back and forth between two clean containers to add oxygen back.
- Disinfect - If the water is clear, add 8 drops of bleach (not color safe or scented) per gallon. If it is cloudy, add 16. Shake or stir, then let stand 30 minutes. A slight chlorine taste and smell is normal.

## Equipment

### Cooking Equipment

- barbeque or camp stove for outdoor cooking, fuel
- heavy-duty aluminum foil
- paper towels
- can opener
- lighter or matches
- bowls, cups, utensils for each household member
- spatula, serving spoon
- cooking pot(s)

### Sanitation Supplies

- large plastic bags for waste
- bucket with plastic bags to line it, kitty litter
- wash basin
- liquid detergent
- toilet paper
- feminine hygiene supplies
- bleach (not color safe or scented) for purifying water

### Clothes

- layers of clothing to keep you warm and dry or protected from sunburn
- sturdy shoes and socks
- work or garden gloves

### Shelter/Bedding

- tent
- sleeping bag or bedroll
- tarp for shade with ropes

*(Continued on page 8)*

# PRO and PFT Mount Retirement Workshop

PRO joined with the Peralta Federation of Teachers to offer a workshop for faculty, administrators and staff of the Peralta District who are planning to retire at the end of this semester. About 25 prospective retirees from all four colleges and the District Office gathered at the Laney campus on Wednesday, March 30. They heard presentations by PFT's President Debby Weintraub, PRO President Jerry Herman, and PRO VP Bruce Jacobs.

Debby kicked off the meeting by announcing that the union and the District had reached an agreement on a retirement incentive for faculty which will mean that if there are a sufficient number of faculty retirements each retiree will get a cash bonus of \$400 for each year of Peralta service. Jerry briefed the audience about PRO's purpose and history and made a pitch for the new retirees to join. Bruce presented a PowerPoint slide show about retiree health benefits and Medicare.

The meeting ended with many of the prospective retirees excited about joining PRO. With membership enrollment forms in hand many of the attendees indicated an interest in being active in PRO once they have retired.



*PRO VP Bruce Jacobs explains how Medicare works with Kaiser and Core-Source to potential retirees.*



*Future retirees pay rapt attention to workshop presentation.*

## **Message From Tucson:**

### **A Gun In Tucson**

*By Albert Vetere Lannon*

A young man with a history of problems, and a gun;  
 Maybe pot-addled, incoherent, but with a gun;  
 Bought across-the-counter, kept legally hidden,  
 Along with 30-round magazines for his gun;  
 Listening to TV news where politicians shout out  
 Reload! Get the enemy in the sights! — of his gun;  
 Expelled from a community college, jobless, he traded  
 Poetry and saxophones and girlfriends for his gun.

A young man with a gun took a cab to a place  
 Where he would shoot his gun, not at tin cans  
 This time, no, at people. At a Congresswoman  
 Meeting with constituents; at a judge; at seniors,  
 And at a nine-year-old girl. A child full of promise.  
 There are shrines now for the dead and wounded.  
 There are pointed fingers and harsh words and even  
 An ever-so-slight shift to civil discourse. Maybe.

It is not only Tucson where you find men with guns.  
 Dallas. Los Angeles. San Francisco. Memphis. New  
 York City. Columbine. Wounded Knee. Afghanistan.  
 Our maps are littered with guns. But "guns don't kill people;  
 People kill people." Not quite. People with guns kill people;  
 People. With. Guns. All kinds of people; all kinds of guns.  
 There are a lot of confused, angry, desperate people  
 In this hard time of recession, and many, many guns.

*Albert Vetere Lannon is a retired faculty member who taught Labor Studies at Laney College He now resides in Tucson, AZ.*

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



**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:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

## ***IN MEMORIAM***

*The following Peralta retiree has passed away during the last months. PRO extends our deepest condolences to his family and loved ones.*

### **Fletcher Hicks**

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

## **Contributions Received for the PRO Scholarship Fund**

<b>In Memory of</b>	<b>Contributor</b>
Walter Asato	Aiko Asato
Tom Warren Carpenter	Lea Guerrero Carpenter
Robert Maynard	Frank and Janet Poulos
Al Mohler and Felix Elizolde	Trudie Fator
Roy Yokote	Rose Hong
<b>In Honor of</b>	<b>Contributor</b>
PRO	Frank and Janet Poulos
<b>On The Occasion Of</b>	<b>Contributor</b>
Jay Quesada's 80th Birthday	Ida Pound

# **Are You Getting Reimbursed for Medicare Part A?**

Medicare Part A covers hospitalization expenses. It is free to anyone who has 40 quarters of Medicare coverage. (This is different from Medicare Part B which covers outpatient expenses and for which everyone pays a premium.) However, anyone can enroll in Medicare Part A—even if they do not have the required quarters—by paying a monthly premium. PCCD retirees who pay for Part A are reimbursed for the premium just as all retirees in Medicare are reimbursed for their Part B premium.

If you have not signed up for Medicare because of the cost, you should consider signing up since being in Medicare is cost-free to retirees under the District's reimbursement program.

Retirees who have been paying Part A premiums may be eligible for free Part A even though they do not have the required quarters. A retiree whose spouse has the required eligibility and who has

reached 62 years of age provides the coverage. If you are not receiving Part A for free and if your spouse is at least 62 and will be eligible for Medicare at age 65, contact Medicare to inform them that you are eligible for free Part A through your spouse. You will be saving the District several thousand dollars a year at a time when every dollar counts!

**(Be Prepared** *Continued from page 5)*

## **Medical/First Aid**

- several day supply of prescription medicines
- extra prescription glasses, contact lenses and solution
- first aid kit
  - antiseptic ointment
  - bandaids and bandages
  - burn ointment
  - pain relievers

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