



The Peralta Retiree

January-March 2016

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<http://www.peraltaretirees.org>

From the President...

by Debby Weintraub, PRO President

At the close of 2015, the PRO Board will be saying goodbye to four Board members who have decided to step down: Pat England, Linda Japzon, Yvonne Price Lewis, and Jay Quesada. Each Board member has made significant contributions to PRO and will be missed not just by the Board, but by the organization as well.

Pat England is one of the founding members of PRO and helped construct the bylaws and constitution of the organization. Pat understood the importance of a strong retiree organization from the git-go and was willing to devote a part of her retirement years to building PRO and serving the community of professionals she had long been a part of at Peralta. She spent ten years on the Board, at times traveling many miles to attend a meeting. Her dedication to the organization is greatly appreciated.

Another PRO Board member that often traveled a good distance to attend the monthly PRO Board meetings is Yvonne Price Lewis. Yvonne, who joined the Board more recently, has done an outstanding job of running the PRO scholarship program and has spent countless hours working with the Peralta Foundation to manage our scholarship funds, recruiting people to read the scholarship applications, and then finding retirees to present the PRO Scholarship at the awards dinner at each college. She worked closely with the PRO Treasurer, Anna Pavelka-Lodato, to be sure all contributions to our scholarship fund were accounted for accurately. Much of Yvonne's work is not really seen by the general membership, but it has a profound impact on the lives of Peralta students and makes PRO a meaningful organization to the entire Peralta community.

It is hard to talk separately about the next two departing Board members, Jay Quesada and Linda Japzon, as they are as close to the definition of "joined at the hip" as any pair of colleagues and friends I have ever

seen. These two women worked tirelessly to throw fun and entertaining social events that brought together retirees from all parts of the Peralta community. Their themed parties were simply wonderful. The most recent one had a Motown motif in which both Jay and Linda donned huge wigs and sparkly outfits a la the divas of that era. Classic 45's from the 60's hung as the centerpiece of each table, and a soulful band played some of the greatest popular music ever made - sounds from the Motor City. But that was just their last effort, the cherry on top of all the events they collaborated on over their ten years on the Board. And they did it all with grace and ease, making it seem like putting together social events for large groups of people was effortless. There was enough fun and energy between these two ladies to flow over to all the rest of us and catch us up in their warmth and appreciation of what it means to stay connected to colleagues after retirement.

Yet they also stopped partying long enough to do some other very important work for PRO. They sat at the PRO table at every District Benefits Day, handing out information on PRO and retirees' benefits. In addition, they were indispensable in an intensive District /PRO joint effort to encourage pre-2004 retirees to sign up for Medicare.

And for all four of our departing Board members, their service on the Board is only a part of their contribution

(Continued on page 2)

Inside This Issue . . .

Pension Overhaul Proposal P. 3

PRO Fall Events P. 5

PRO Elections and Board News P. 6

More Photos P. 8

(President...Continued from page 1)



Linda Japzon and Jay Quesada in Motown mode

to the Peralta community. They were all very dedicated Peralta employees for multiple years. Again, a very large and heartfelt thank you to these four wonderful women.

Two new Board members were elected at the November annual membership meeting:

Patricia Dudley and John Lodato. Patricia is a fairly recent retiree while John has been enjoying retirement since 2008. Patricia hails from two colleges over her career as a nurse/faculty member: Merritt and CoA. She comes to PRO with lots of energy and a real gift for doing the kind of detail work around health benefits that many of us would rather avoid but are so grateful someone else is willing to do. John was based in the Laney photography department and has a special interest and talent in marketing and would love to build PRO's membership

base using his skills. I know that PRO will be well served by our new Board members.

It doesn't take a math whiz to notice that we are two seats short of a full Board at this point. We are hoping that a couple of non-faculty retirees with whom we have spoken are going to step forward.

We can always use retiree volunteers who want to help with the work to keep PRO vital. In particular we need help with social events and the scholarship committee. We're also looking for someone who can work on the PRO newsletter. I'd also like to encourage any of you that are thinking about contributions to consider donating to the PRO scholarship fund. Our scholarships, one \$1500 award per college, really can change the life of a Peralta student.

Finally, I wish for a safer, kinder world for all of us. As people that have worked in the wonderfully diverse world of the Peralta Community College District, we know how important tolerance and appreciation of all people are to having healthy, strong communities. Please spread that knowledge and discourage others from making any community unsafe for any of us.

Peralta Retirees Organization

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I have made a donation to the PRO Scholarship Fund in honor of Linda Japzon and Jay Quesada. I'd like to explain why. Throughout my tenure as PRO president, Linda and Jay have been the organizers of virtually all of PRO's social events. I have always maintained that PRO should not be a one-dimensional organization, and Linda and Jay have made sure that we've had more on our plate than just protecting our health benefits.

They are retiring from the PRO Board, and I want to express my appreciation for their dedication, hard work and creativity in organizing PRO's social events for the last ten years. They've provided the social glue that has kept PRO a vibrant, personal organization where Peralta retirees can meet with each other to share food, drink, entertainment and just have a heck of a good time. Most of all, thanks Linda and Jay for the wonderful fun you've provided us for the last decade!

Jerry Herman
PRO past president

So-Called "Pension Reform" Back on California's Agenda

For the last few years former San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed, a Democrat, and former San Diego Councilman Carl DeMaio, a Republican have teamed up to try to bring a statewide vote on ending defined benefit pensions for public employees. Their current constitutional amendment proposal would theoretically apply only to new hires but both STRS and PERS have indicated that were it to pass it would affect their ability to meet their pension obligations. The following article, reprinted from the business section of the LA Times, has the details.-BJ

Count the bad ideas in California pension overhaul proposal

by Michael Hiltzik

Along with taxation and immigration, one political issue that never seems to go away is the cost of public employees, especially their pensions.

Public retirement plans are consistently blamed for local and state budget woes. Any time a community runs into fiscal trouble, its workers are among the first to be demonized, and often bear the brunt of the remedies. After all, pension obligations are typically among the largest liabilities any government entity must bear, so why not hack away?

In California, pension overhaul proposals have become a perennial feature of state and local ballot campaigns. Failed proposals were aimed at the statewide ballot twice in the last four years, and the proponents of the last effort, in 2014, have started the ball rolling for a new measure.

Like so many voter initiatives, the "Voter Empowerment Act of 2016" has a few reasonable-sounding nuggets buried within a landscape of bad ideas. Atty. Gen. Kamala D. Harris gave the measure its formal title and summary last week. So its proponents, former San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed, a Democrat, and former San Diego Councilman Carl DeMaio, a Republican, can shortly start collecting signatures to place it on the November 2016 ballot. As one can tell from their name for it, the measure will be pitched merely as a way to give taxpayers a direct vote on the pension plans of their public servants.

But there's much more to it than that. The Wall Street Journal described the measure as one that would "end defined-benefit pensions and save taxpayers billions of dollars." The measure would end defined benefit plans for new public employees as of Jan. 1, 2019, unless voters affirmatively continue them. But the second part of the phrase is arguable, as the cost of terminating plans could be high.

The Legislative Analyst's Office observes that cutting worker pensions also could mean that government bodies would have to raise wages to attract and keep qualified employees. Depending on the ultimate retirement packages, government employers could end up on the hook for Social Security, costing them as much as 6.2% of payroll.

The legislative analyst and Harris say the measure could undermine or even nullify the "California Rule," a collection of court rulings guaranteeing that pension benefits can't be reduced after an employee is hired.

That's a major change that could deprive the measure lots of public support. Reed says it's untrue. The measure "doesn't affect the benefits of current employees at all," he told me. Yet as is pointed out by critics representing public employees, the measure gives voters the right to determine "the amount of and manner in which compensation and retirement benefits are provided." It explicitly protects only benefits earned for "work performed," implying that benefits based on *future* work of current government employees, starting as soon as the day after a vote, could be cut.

The giant California Public Employees' Retirement System and California State Teachers Retirement System, CalPERS and CalSTRS, both say the initiative would create immense administrative and financial uncertainties associated with closing standardized defined benefit plans to new workers and replacing them with — in CalSTRS' case — as many as 1,700 individual school district retirement plans with differing terms and benefits.

(Continued on page 4)

(Pension Reform ...Continued from page 3)

Who would gain from a shift of public pensions toward defined contribution plans? Wall Street, which could collect those fees from individual worker accounts rather than facing down increasingly cost-conscious pension funds. One of those sounding the alarm about the public pension "crisis" is billionaire investment impresario John Arnold, who backed Reed's 2014 initiative with \$200,000. Asked whether Arnold would be involved this time around, Reed said, "I hope so." He estimates that an initiative campaign might cost \$25 million.

Who would lose? Government employees. When the Central Valley city of Stockton filed for bankruptcy in 2012, city workers were quickly blamed. One of Stockton's creditors, the investment firm Franklin Templeton, asserted that its employees had routinely "spiked" their salaries to make their "lavish benefits" even richer. The truth was that the average retiree received \$24,000 a year and that the workers had sustained waves of furloughs, given up years of cost-of-living increases, and lost virtually all their retiree health benefits during the struggle to keep the city afloat.

One reliable rule of thumb about municipal fiscal crises is that wherever you find a large retirement liability, you can be sure that the rot originates much deeper. In Stockton, it encompassed ill-advised investments in downtown amenities, as well as a costly pension debt refinancing into which the city was snookered by the ill-starred investment firm Lehman Bros. Similarly, the 2012 bankruptcy of the city of San Bernardino reflected the housing bubble and crash, along with fiscal mismanagement that included years of allegedly faked books.

The statewide pension shortfall likewise flowed from the top down. When state pension funds fattened up on rich stock market returns in the 1990s, lawmakers bestowed retroactive pension increases on state workers, while CalPERS and the other major public pension funds gifted government employees with contribution "holidays." CalPERS told the Legislature that these arrangements would be almost cost-free, thanks to "the booming stock market." But when the markets crashed, the pension funds landed

deeper in the hole than anyone had anticipated.

Some critics undoubtedly will blame state public worker unions and their stranglehold on Democratic office holders, but, alas, these were bipartisan blunders; 22 Republicans in the Assembly and all 15 GOP senators voted for the retroactive sweeteners. Reed, to his credit, isn't among those suffering political amnesia. "Employees didn't cause these problems," he told me. "Elected officials drove us off the cliff."

The burden of making up for their mistakes is borne by employees — especially newly hired workers, who are relegated in almost every pension "reform" to a lower-cost second-tier retirement system with skimpier benefits than their seniors. That's the remedy embodied in a 2013 statute that instituted less-generous pensions for new employees and raised their contributions to at least half the costs of their pensions. The Legislature also barred retroactive benefit hikes and set CalSTRS on course to eliminate its entire unfunded liability over the next 30 years.

The initiative from Reed and DiMaio allows voters to enact even more stringent pension plans. Reed says he's confident that the "public isn't interested in punishing employees," so voters will be judicious about making pensions too cheap. We'll see. If the initiative makes it to next year's ballot, expect the airwaves to fill up with images of retired cops, firefighters and teachers enjoying round-the-world vacations while you, the taxpayer, struggle to make ends meet. Initiative campaigns are extremely vulnerable to exaggeration and demagoguery. So is the topic of public employee pensions. Put them together, and the result might be ugly indeed.

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Michael Hiltzik writes the daily blog "The Economy Hub." His business column appears every Sunday and Wednesday. As a member of the Los Angeles Times staff, he has been a financial and technology writer and a foreign correspondent. He is the author of five books, including "Dealers of Lightning: Xerox PARC and the Dawn of the Computer Age" and "The New Deal: A Modern History." Hiltzik and colleague Chuck Philips shared the 1999 Pulitzer Prize for articles exposing corruption in the entertainment industry.

PRO's Fall Events: Party For New Chancellor, Annual Membership Luncheon - Meeting

Chancellor's Reception

On October 18, Shirley Connor graciously donated the use of her Alameda home for PRO's Chancellor's Reception. Forty attendees enjoyed refreshments and warm sunshine to welcome Dr. Jowell Laguerre to Peralta. In his address to the group, the new chancellor spoke of his background and outlined his plans for the district. He was especially supportive of PRO and the work that we do, declaring that PRO was the most active retiree organization that he has come across in his career. We hope to maintain Dr. Laguerre's respect and support throughout his tenure as Peralta's chancellor.



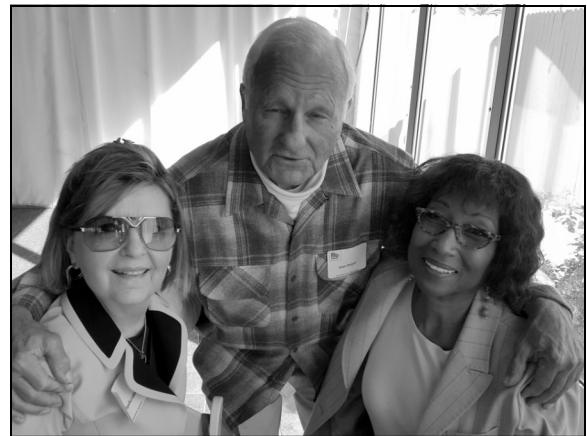
PRO Members Joe Camara, Mary K. Holland, Maria Scott and Ida Pound listen raptly to the new Chancellor



Jerry Herman, Odell Johnson and Michael Mills

Annual Meeting and Lunch

PRO's annual membership meeting and luncheon on November 12 was held, as usual, at the Wedgewood Banquet Center adjacent to the Oakland International Airport. Social Committee co-chairs Linda Japzon and Jay Quesada set Motown as the luncheon theme, and the excellent Ben Luis Band regaled the crowd with Motown hits throughout the afternoon.



PRO Treasurer Anna Pavelka-Lodato, Stan Peters, and retiring PRO board member Yvonne Lewis-Price at the Annual Meeting



Joe Camara and Debby Weintraub groovin' with Bill Sato and Linda Japzon in the background

More photos on page 8

PRO Board News: Elections and Foundation Meeting

PRO Board Elections

In the short business meeting held at the annual luncheon veteran PRO Board members Remo Arancio and Ann Whitehead were re-elected to the board. Newcomers Patricia Dudley and John Lodato also won board seats. PRO president Debby Weintraub expressed PRO's appreciation to retiring board members Jay Quesada, Pat England, Linda Japzon, and Yvonne Lewis. They have each provided invaluable service to PRO over the years and their contributions will be sorely missed.

Patricia started at Merritt in 1993 as an instructor in the registered nursing program. She was the director of the program for three years, and served as a co-chair of the Curriculum Committee. She transferred to College of Alameda in 2003 as the College Nurse. She became the Director of Health Services for the District in 2010, but eventually went back to COA. She was the chair of COA Staff Development and the co-chair of the COA Accreditation Committee. She was elected as PFT grievance officer in 2011 and served for three years before using her leave banking to travel around the world. She retired in 2015. Her goal is to be a watchdog for PRO in maintaining benefits.



Patricia Dudley (and Xoxo)

John worked for 20 years at Laney serving as the chair of the Commercial Photography Department. He retired in June, 2008. He will be taking over as PRO's Membership Chair. John says that "One reason I accepted this responsibility was the fact that PRO is an important advocate for our pension benefits - benefits that we paid for and earned during our active years at Peralta."



John Lodato

Perhaps, most of all, as a member of the PRO Board John is looking forward to visiting with the many friends he made during his active working years. He wants to extend a thank you to current members for

their membership and his message to all our prospective members is: We need you and look forward to your being with us soon. He welcomes all suggestions on helping us to grow our membership.

Foundation Meeting

The PRO Board met with the new Executive Director of the Peralta Foundation, Kevin Kosik, at its December meeting. He was introduced by PRO member Michael Mills who serves as chair of the Foundation's Scholarship Committee. Kevin brings a long history of non-profit leadership experience to the Foundation and is responsible for resource development and fundraising, community relations, volunteer development and organizational effectiveness.



Kevin Kosik

The discussion focused on the need for increased scholarship assistance to District students as well as the need to improve the Foundation's administrative processes. Last year the Foundation distributed \$125,000 to 181 students. This year the Foundation hopes to increase the number of students served. At an earlier meeting the PRO Board voted to increase the size of each PRO scholarship from \$1000 to \$1500.

PRO Volunteers Needed

PRO needs help. With the recent retirements from the PRO Board, there is a need for some retirees to step forward to help with both organizing PRO's social events and managing PRO's scholarship program. We are also looking for someone who has desktop publishing skills who would like to help with the quarterly newsletter. It isn't necessary to be a member of the PRO Board or to attend PRO Board meetings to work on these activities. To learn more contact PRO President Debby Weintraub at info@peraltaretirees.org.

Welcome New Member

PRO welcomes the following retiree who has recently joined.

Karolyn van Putten

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, 1250-I Newell Ave., #162, Walnut Creek, CA 94596

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

Contributions Received for the PRO Scholarship Fund	PRO Board & Officers	Sue Chin
	General Contribution	Ida Asato

In Memory of:	Contributor
John Beverly	Chris Hadley and Helen Bersie
Fred Marks	Ed Jaramillo
Vickie Redus	Bill Sato
Ernie Spirakis	Jim Mohr
Martina Wilson	Juanita Peterson
Roy Yokote	Jim Mohr
In Honor of:	Contributor
Linda Japzon and Jay Quesada	Jerry Herman
Alex Pappas	Will Price

IN MEMORIAM

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

**John Beverly
Patricia Furlong
Bernardo Garcia-Pandavenes
Oliver Kellogg
Victoria Redus**

If you have any information about the passing or the serious illness of a Peralta retiree, please contact Bruce Jacobs at: brucejacobs@gmail.com or by writing to PRO, 1250-I Newell Ave., #162, Walnut Creek, CA 94596

More Photos From PRO's Annual Luncheon



PRO President Debby Weintraub convenes the meeting



Former PRO Board members Sondra Neiman and Ned Pearlstein catch up with Lois Wilkerson and Elaine Chen-Ramirez



Diana Lara , who serves as a PRO representative on the District Benefits Committee

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