



The Peralta Retiree

October-December 2016

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<http://www.peraltaretirees.org>

From the President...

by Debby Weintraub, PRO President

While waiting for a tour guide in a small but lively square in the city of Porto, Portugal recently, I became intrigued by a large gathering of men clustered under a grouping of palm trees at one end of the park. Taking a closer look, I discovered four card tables and chairs, each with three or four elderly men playing a brisk game of cards surrounded by more elderly male on-lookers intently watching each hand.

When our guide arrived, a young under-employed female architect, I gestured toward the card games. She explained that these were all retired men, living, as do almost all Portuguese retirees, on a pension of under \$600.00 a month. The friendly card game was one of their few affordable activities. Our guide further explained that most Portuguese workers received the minimum wage throughout their lifetime, a little less than \$6.00/ hour- even skilled nurses, teachers and other professional jobs. Even though their cost of living is less than ours, it is still very difficult to get by on such low wages. As sometimes happens when I travel, I realized that something that appears like a kind of poetic picture: a community of people enjoying themselves in a tree-lined square, also had another harder aspect to it as well.

The scene in the park made me realize once again how fortunate we are as Peralta retirees. How lucky we were to have strong unions representing us to help make our retirement more financially viable. We have affordable health care and pensions based on our wages - wages that our unions fought to keep competitive so we could retire with some sense of security. It was alarming and unsettling to learn of retirees with so little, particularly because the guide noted that the unions in Portugal had been greatly weakened over the years.

In discussions with Portuguese and European travelers whom we met, I was reminded that the upcoming

(Continued on page 7)

Upcoming PRO Event:

Annual Membership Meeting and Luncheon

Thursday, November 10

11 AM - 2 PM



See details on page 3

Inside This Issue . . .

PRO Board Election	P. 2
PRO Annual Luncheon	P. 3
Social Security	P. 4
Prop 55	P. 6
PRO Picnic Photos	P. 8

PCCD Board Elections 2016

The only contested election for a seat on the Peralta Board this November is for Area 6 where long time Board member Cy Gulassa is retiring. There are two candidates running for the seat:

According to her campaign literature **Karen Weinstein** is a counseling psychologist who has spent her career helping people make better lives for themselves and their families. She is endorsed by the PFT, Trustees Cy Gulassa and Nicky Gonzalez Yuen, and a long list of local and state politicians.

More info at **KarenWeinsteinforPeralta.com**

Also running is **Nick Resnick**, a former middle school teacher in Oakland Unified. Currently Nick works with K-12 school districts cross California to support their mathematics programs.

More info at **ResnickforPeralta.com**

Peralta Retirees Organization

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

<http://www.peraltaretirees.org>

President - Debby Weintraub
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The Peralta Retiree

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Volume 13 Number 1

PRO Election 2016

Nominations Now Open

The PRO Board opened nominations for this year's Board election at the September 7 Board meeting. This year there are six seats that need to be filled. The following people, all of whom currently serve on the Board, were nominated for two-year terms at the Board meeting.

- Tom Branca
- Bruce Jacobs
- Alex Pappas
- Anna Pavelka-Lodato
- Debby Weintraub

One additional seat is currently vacant.

Members are encouraged to submit additional nominations by mailing the nominee's name to the PRO Postal Box (1250-I Newell Ave., #162 Walnut Creek, CA 94596), or by emailing the nomination to info@peraltaretirees.org. Please make the subject of your email "Nomination for Board." The nominator must include his/her name and should have verified that the nominee is willing to serve if elected.

Nominees and nominators must be current in their payment of PRO dues (through the end of 2016). Self-nominations are permitted. Nominations will close at the general business meeting on November 10 (see page 3 for information about the meeting).

If there are more than six nominees an election will be conducted by mail during December. If there are only six nominees the general membership meeting will be asked to elect the nominees by acclamation. The new Board members will start serving at the January 2017 meeting.



PRO's Annual Luncheon and Membership Meeting



Thursday ■ November 10

Social Hour

**11 AM – Noon
(No Host Bar)**

Buffet Luncheon

**Noon – 1:30 PM
\$20/Person**

Short Business Meeting to Follow

Featuring Music by Glen Pearson

Location

**Wedgewood Banquet Center
Metropolitan Golf Links
10051 Doolittle Drive
Oakland, CA 94603
=====**

Driving Directions

From Sacramento: I-80 toward SF. Take I-580 East toward Alameda/San Jose/Downtown Oakland. Merge onto I-980 West toward Downtown Oakland. Merge onto I-880 South toward San Jose. Take the Hegenberger Road exit toward the Oakland Airport. Turn right on Hegenberger Road. Turn left onto Doolittle Drive (last turn before the airport entrance). Golf course is on the right.

From San Jose: I-880 North toward Oakland. Take the Davis Street exit. Turn left onto Davis Street. Turn right onto Doolittle Drive. The golf course will be on your left.

Luncheon Reservations
Required by Monday, Oct. 31

To reserve: Send a check made out to 'PRO' for \$20 for each person in your party attending the luncheon. Mail your check to:
**PRO
1250-I Newell Ave., #162
Walnut Creek, CA 94596**

Please include the name(s) of all attendees that you are paying for. There is no charge to attend the business meeting, and it is not necessary to reserve if you do not plan to have lunch.

Name _____

Number Attending _____

Names of additional guests attending:

Total enclosed (\$20/person) \$ _____

Questions? Call or text John Lodato at 925-932-4323

Social Security Penalties Hurt Retired Faculty

By Bruce Jacobs

This past summer I received emails from two Peralta retirees with Social Security questions. In one case, Social Security had informed the retiree that she needed to repay thousands of dollars that she had received in overpayments because SSA had not been aware that she was getting a STRS pension. The second call was from a recently widowed retiree who learned to her dismay that she would not receive the spousal benefits that are usually paid to spouses of deceased Social Security recipients. These two teachers were hurt by what are called “public servant penalties” in Social Security – the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset. Below is a detailed explanation of how these provisions work.

Background

Originally, the Social Security system excluded state and local government employees from coverage. In 1954, state and local employees were given the opportunity to elect to participate in the Social Security program. California public school educators chose

not to join because they were paying for better disability and survivor benefits than what would have been provided by Social Security. However, many CalSTRS members and other government workers are eligible for Social Security benefits because they had other employment that was covered by Social Security or by being married to a Social Security recipient.

Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP)

The Rationale

Social Security is intended to provide a greater level of income replacement for poorer members of society. The formula could not differentiate between those who worked in low-paying jobs their entire career and those who appeared to have received low pay because they worked for many years in jobs not covered by Social Security. Congress believed that the non-Social Security pension benefit would be an adequate retirement even if the earned Social Security

(Continued on page 5)

Renewal Due for Retirees Whose Membership Expires at the End of 2016

Check the label on your Newsletter to determine when your membership expires. If the label says 2016 or before then you need to renew for 2017.

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

It's easier than ever to renew your membership in PRO. You can now pay your dues for 2017:

- securely by credit card at the PRO web site.
Just go to: www.peraltaretirees.org/index.htm
- by mailing your check to PRO, 1250-I Newell Avenue, #168, Walnut Creek, CA 94596
- by bringing a check to PRO's Annual Meeting on November 12 (see page 3).

(Social Security ...Continued from page 4)
rity benefit was cut.

The Formula

The typical Social Security benefit is figured by a three step formula. The first step provides 90 percent of the first \$816 of average monthly earnings; the second step provides 32 percent of the next \$4,101, and the final step provides 15 percent of the remaining earnings. For a retired teacher, the benefit is figured on a modified formula. Instead of 90 percent of the first \$816, the benefit is calculated on 40 percent of those earnings – a reduction of 50 percent!

The WEP affects those educators who have work experience both in the CalSTRS system and in Social Security-covered employment. For someone who has 20 years or less in Social Security jobs, the WEP reduces the Social Security benefit by 50 percent.

The Reality

Teaching is not a highly-paid profession and imposition of the WEP formula results in significant losses of earned retirement income. Most agree that the amount of the reduction was an arbitrary figure, and since it applies only to the first increment of earnings it is a highly regressive formula. It is essentially the only means-testing in Social Security, but without taking into account the actual income of the recipient.

The WEP also significantly reduces the ability to recruit private industry workers to bring their skills and knowledge to California's classrooms. This transfer of knowledge is particularly important in some of the high technology areas for California high schools and community colleges.

The Government Pension Offset (GPO)

The Rationale

The GPO, which passed in 1977, was imposed to stop highly-paid federal civil servants from being able to double-dip into Social Security and other

pensions.

The Formula

The GPO deprives retired educators of their spousal and survivor benefits under Social Security. Typically spouses of Social Security recipients receive half of the amount of their partner's benefit if they do not qualify for Social Security on their own. Under the GPO, that amount is reduced by two-thirds of the amount of a CalSTRS pension.

For example: John collects a Social Security benefit of \$800 a month. His wife Mary is a retired school teacher drawing a CalSTRS pension of \$1,200 a month.

Effect of GPO With Living Spouse

Mary's Potential Social Security: $\$800 \times 1/2 = \400
CalSTRS Pension Calculated for GPO: $\$1,200 \times 2/3 = \800

Total Monthly Social Security: $\$400 - \$800 = \text{No benefit}$

Effect of GPO Upon Death

Mary's Social Security Survivor (Death) Benefit: \$800

CalSTRS Pension Calculated for GPO: $\$1,200 \times 2/3 = \800

Total Monthly Social Security: $\$800 - \$800 = \text{No benefit}$

(Note: If there is no Social Security benefit, the surviving spouse also could be required to pay more for Medicare Part B, although because Medicare B payments are reimbursed by the Peralta District, this affects the District rather than the retiree.) Even in cases where a total offset has not occurred, any increase in the teacher's pension results in a recalculation of the offset, reducing the Social Security benefit.

The GPO penalizes the public worker, such as a teacher, not the spouse. If the retired teacher has a survivor's benefit on his/her pension, the spouse receives that full amount plus any Social Security to which either party is initially eligible.

The Reality

The GPO hits hardest those who have provided lifetime careers of public service often for compara-

(Continued on page 6)

Yes on 55

Proposition Funds Schools and Community Colleges

The following is excerpted from a fact sheet provided by the California Federation of Teachers.

Proposition 30, officially known as the Schools and Local Public Safety Protection Act of 2012, has been successful in stabilizing the fiscal health of K - 12 schools and community colleges, which had been reeling from the Great Recession on top of years of underfunding. The proposition was funded by raising income tax rates (by 1% - 3%) on the wealthy (individuals making over \$250,000, and families making over \$500,000), and increasing sales taxes by a quarter of a cent (0.25 percent).

The proposition was designed as a temporary measure. The additional sales tax is due to expire on December 31, 2016; the personal income tax increase will sunset at the end of 2018. However, considering the success that Prop 30 has had in resurrecting much-needed programs, especially reaching the students who need the most help, it is imperative to extend Prop 30 and maintain progress toward a first - class education system.

Proposition 55, on the November 2016 ballot, called the “Children’s Education and Health Care Protection Act of 2016,” will drop the sales tax; it seeks only to extend the income tax on the wealthy for twelve years. It is estimated this will bring in \$5–11 billion per year.

- Prop 30 stemmed fiscal bleeding and saved jobs. The San Jose Mercury-News reasoned that the proposition “stabilized school funding in California for the first time since the Great Recession began, allowing school districts to avert thousands of teacher layoffs.”
- “There is absolutely no reason why we should not extend Prop 30,” says CFT president Joshua Pechthalt.” While Prop 30 has been a major success, public education in California is seriously underfunded and we still rank near the bottom in of the nation in per-pupil spending, class-size average and per-student ratio in nurses, librarians and counselors.”
- In community colleges, students are once more able to access classes cut during the Great Recession. In Citrus College, hundreds of class sections have been restored; in LACCD, thousands of classes. Prop 30 monies average 15% of revenues

for community college districts. Peralta has received almost \$20 million dollars from Prop 30 funds.

You will hear arguments like “the economy has recovered so there is no need for Prop 55.” But this is a recovery in which over 90% of the income gains have gone into the pockets of the richest 1%. We need Prop 55 for the same reasons we needed Prop 30: to restore funding lost to years of cuts, and restore resources teachers need to teach and programs students need to learn. You will hear the same arguments against Prop 55 that we heard during the Prop 30 campaign: all the rich people will leave California, and they will take all the jobs with them. Here are the simple facts: Since Prop 30 passed, California has gained 1.4 million private sector jobs, and there were 10 thousand more California millionaires in 2014 [last year figures available] than before Prop 30 passed in 2012, according to the California Budget & Policy Center. Well-off people don’t leave a state because their income taxes are raised a few percentage points. They are more likely to stay in a state with robust public services and a dynamic education system. Finally, we all know that eventually there will be a recession. The economy is cyclical. We do not need to repeat the experience of 2008-2011, with layoffs of tens of thousands of teachers and terrible disruptions to students’ education. We can’t go back. Prop 55 is the bottom line to ensure California’s future remains bright.

(Social Security ...Continued from page 5) tively lower salaries and pensions. The GPO also discourages both individuals and spouses who have earned Social Security benefits from entering into CalSTRS-covered employment because of the double penalty of the WEP and the spousal offset.

Much of the information for this article was taken from the website of the California Retired Teachers Association: <http://calrta.org/>. There are currently efforts underway to repeal both the WEP and the GPO. The CRTA website provides updates on those efforts.

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

elections in this country have a global impact. Everyone was greatly aware and deeply concerned about the outcome of our presidential election.

On the state level, numerous initiatives are on the California ballot covering a wide range of significant issues. There are several ballot measures that all retirees in California should take note of before voting. Proposition 52 concerns the need for voter approval before diverting hospital fee revenues dedicated to Medicare. Proposition 55, endorsed by the PFT and its parent union, CFT, calls for an increased personal income tax on people earning more than \$250,000 a year, and the highly controversial Proposition 61 concerns prescription drug pricing.

On the local level, Cy Gulassa's Area 6 seat on the Peralta Board of Trustees has two candidates running. Cy will be stepping down after dedicating many years of his time and talents to helping the Peralta community. Karen Weinstein (who has reached out to me as PRO President and has been endorsed by the PFT and other unions) and Nick Resnick have both declared their intent to run and have websites with more information about their interests and experiences regarding Peralta.

Former PRO President Jerry Herman and I had a meeting with Chancellor Laguerre in early August. The discussion focused on ways the district and PRO can work together to better serve retirees. PRO asked the Chancellor to consider the following items:

- Helping PRO develop and maintain a list of people who have retired throughout the district.
- Allowing all retirees to remain on the Peralta edu listserv (or finding a way through the Peralta Foundation) so PRO may communicate with all former employees about upcoming news, events and important information for Peralta retirees.
- Collaborating on a Speakers Series: PRO is interested in sponsoring speakers to address Peralta retirees, employees, students and the community on issues that we think are relevant and important to retirees and others. We would like the district to support us by providing space and access through the various Peralta communication systems to advertise the events, as well as helping

with any costs for speakers.

We also discussed ways to enhance communication between retirees and the Benefits Office. Several suggestions we made were:

- Develop and distribute a survey to retirees for feedback concerning their access to their benefits, their ability to receive help and review of the current web site. The survey would be developed with PRO input and would be distributed by mail if needed as some PRO members do not use computers.
- Getting input from retirees on ways to restructure the District Benefits website to make it more user friendly for PRO members.
- Speaking with Alliant (the district's medical consultant) about access to representatives via phone.

Jerry and I also emphasized the importance of the Benefits Office to retirees and our firm belief that the primary purpose of the Benefits Office should be to assist individuals in accessing their earned benefits. We also explained that retirees may need extra help, more than being referred to a website, as some of our PRO members are not comfortable or facile with computers.

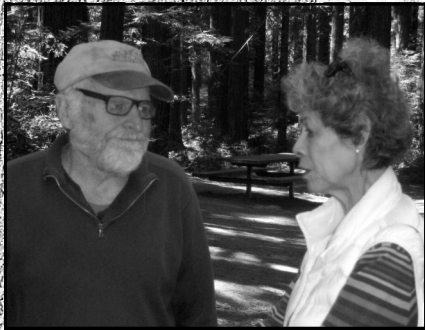
We hope to see all of you at our **annual November luncheon to be held on Thursday, November 10 at 12:00 at the Wedgewood Banquet Center in Oakland** (see page 3 for details and a reservation form). We will be closing nominations for Board members, and we are still desperately seeking members to serve on the Board (particularly non-faculty retirees) which will now be meeting only 8 times a year.

Our "bring your own picnic" this year was delightful and attended by over 20 PRO members. Please see photos within this newsletter (page 6).

In closing, I would like to personally thank Cy Gulassa for his work. I had the privilege of working with him over the years and I appreciated his intelligent and thoughtful manner. And Cy, if you are reading this, please join us at PRO meetings and activities. Remember PRO membership is open to retired trustees!

August is the time for PRO's Annual Picnic in the Redwoods. A large group of retirees gathered at the Huckleberry Picnic Area on Thursday, August 11. The day was lovely and sunny, perfect picnic weather, and the setting, with redwood trees towering over the picnic tables, was idyllic. Thanks go to Board members Anna Pavelka-Lodato and Debby Weintraub for making arrangements for the site.

Pictures From the Picnic



Tom Southworth and Eddy Chandler



Helene Maxwell and Debby Weintraub



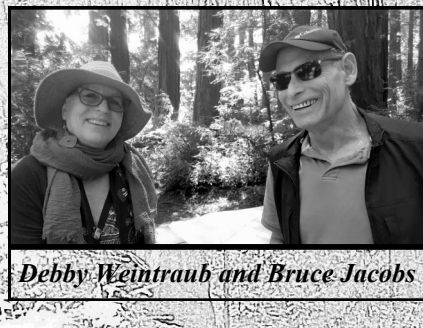
Anna Pavelka-Lodato and Ann Whitehead



Jerry Herman, Stan Peters, Jack Mooradian, and John Lodato



Don Hongisto



Debby Weintraub and Bruce Jacobs

More photos on page 10

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

In Memory of:	Contributor
Boris Gregory	Roger Ferragallo
Janet Poulos	Sue Chin

Welcome New Members

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

Katherine Kocel
Patricia Tsai

IN MEMORIAM

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

**W. Jon Lambden
Patricia Russ**

*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*

PRO Picnic



Judy Thomas, Neil Dunlop and Eddy Chandler

2016



Barbara and Tom Southworth

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