



From the President...

By Debby Weintraub

It is a new year, and one which I hope will bring much-needed positive changes. But that will require those of us who want to see transformations on both a local and national level to be active. I am personally enormously inspired by the voters in Virginia and in Alabama, particularly the African-American community; the women who are speaking out against sexual harassment; and my friends and family who are spending weekends and evenings doing what they can to get out the vote for the 2018 mid-year elections.



On a local level, several members of the Peralta Community College Board of Trustees will be running for their seats on the Board in the fall of 2018. Though we are retired, we should be involved in the election as the people who sit on the Board hold fiduciary responsibility for our District. Since our retirement benefits are, in part, dependent on the financial stability of the district, we should stay engaged with the goings-on of the Board and review the decisions Board members have made over the years.

On a national level, beyond Senate and House of Representative races, there is a case going before the Supreme Court sometime in the spring of 2018 that will deeply impact the rights of unions: Janus vs AFSCME. This lawsuit will decide whether public sector unions in 22 states, including California, may continue to charge an agency fee (aka-fair share fee) to non-members in a workplace represented by the union for representing them in collective bargaining negotiations or providing help as needed. Unions also use a small percentage of each non-member's fee for political advocacy, but that amount is returned

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PRO Membership Renewal Due for Retirees Whose Membership Expired at the end of 2017.

Check the label on your newsletter to determine when your membership expires. If the label says 2017 or before, then you need to renew for 2018.

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at the end of each fiscal year to any agency/fair share fee payer that requests that portion of her fee returned.

Yet, the folks behind the lawsuit, backed by The Center for Individual Rights and other right-wing advocacy groups supported by the Koch Brothers, contend that their free speech is abridged by fair share fees, even when they are not paying for political advocacy.

Most people looking into this case agree that unions could suffer a huge if not insurmountable setback. The end result will be the diminishing of union strength and power. In states without full union rights, workers make less money per year, are less likely to have health benefits, and general safety and working conditions are worse.

So why should retirees care about this? Because as unions' power diminishes, the gains unions have made will be aggressively challenged and stripped away. Today we have large state and national unions backing our hard-earned retirement benefits. As a result, our pensions and our benefits are protected, but they may not always be if unions are dismantled. As retirees, we are still very dependent on the unions that represented us to continue to look out for retirees and fight to protect our earned retirement benefits. If those unions disappear, so does our advocacy power. So, paying attention to this and doing what you can to help unions stay strong should be a priority for all of us.

In November, I participated in a CFT (California Federation of Teachers) and PFT drive to sign up new PFT members and have current members sign a statement of support for the union. CFT and PFT may ask for help again. If they decide to have another membership drive, I hope those of you who can help, will do so. In this issue you can read more about the Janus case in a *Sacramento Bee* article.

In the meanwhile, on a very local front, I have met several times with the interim District Benefits Manager, Cody Pelletier. He is very open and eager to collaborate with retirees. He is working with us on a problem faced by some CoreSource

members that we mentioned in the last newsletter: “crossover billing”, when a provider bills Medicare, but the secondary coverage is not billed. Occasionally, retirees were being charged by their provider for the portion Medicare was not covering. Cody is working with CoreSource to clear up this billing problem, but urges anyone who experiences any problems or is unsure what to do, to contact him directly (510) 587-7868 or cpelletier@peralta.edu.

Cody has been actively working to improve services for employees and retirees including reimbursement for Kaiser prescriptions quarterly rather than bi-annually and streamlining documentation processes for enrollment in district services. See the interview with Cody in this issue.

Finally, it appears that at least one of the “privi-

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Peralta Retirees Organization

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

Volume 14 Number 2

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 leges” retirees will have soon is district email addresses. As mentioned in the last newsletter, I am working with Joseph Bielanski and the Chancellor on establishing emeritus status for all employees who served for ten or more years with the district before their retirement. Jennifer Shanoski, the current PFT President, has also been requesting that retirees have a district email address when they retire, and Jennifer’s advocacy has been very helpful. I think the other “privileges” that were requested for retirees will come by the end of the academic year: parking, use of certain district facilities, and discounts on Peralta sponsored events.

We had a lovely but smaller than usual luncheon membership meeting in November, primarily put together by John Lodato with help from his wife, Anna. The food and company were delightful and Glen Pearson’s jazz trio was superb. Check out photos from the luncheon in this issue.

Congratulations to our re-elected PRO Board Members: Patricia Dudley, John Lodato, Bruce Jacobs, and Tom Branca. We now have two vacancies on our Board as Remo Arancio and Carol Dalessio stepped down this year.

I hope you all have a very happy and healthy new year.

Renewal Due for Retirees Whose PRO Membership Expired at the End of 2017



Check the label on your Newsletter to determine when your membership expires. If the label says 2017 or before, then you need to renew for 2018.

Dues are:

\$20	—	1 year
\$55	—	3 years
\$80	—	5 years
\$250	—	Lifetime

It’s easier than ever to renew your membership in PRO. You can now pay your dues for 2018:

- 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, #162
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California Unions Brace for a Supreme Court Loss

'Everything is at stake'

By Adam Ashton

Sacramento Bee October 24, 2017

California labor leaders sound almost apocalyptic when they describe a looming Supreme Court case that many of them concede likely will cost them members and money.

"Everything is at stake," says Yvonne Walker, president of Service Employees International Local 1000, state government's largest union.

"It's a blatant political attack," says Eric Heins, the leader of the California Teachers Association.

"That's a way that the corporations are trying to take our legs out from under us," says Kim Cowart, a state registered nurse and SEIU union leader.

They're alarmed by *Janus vs. AFSCME*, the Illinois lawsuit that challenges the rights of unions in 22 states to collect so-called "fair share" fees from employees who do not want

to join bargaining groups but may benefit from representation. That practice has been legal and common since 1977, when the Supreme Court favored union arguments for fair-share fees in a lawsuit against the Detroit Board of Education.

Since then, business-backed groups and politicians have chipped away at fair-share fees across the country. They contend that the fees subsidize a union's political activities, undermining the First Amendment rights of some workers.

Now, unions anticipate a 5-4 Supreme Court decision banning the mandatory dues with President Donald Trump's nominee on the court, Neil Gorsuch, tilting the balance against their side just a year after the court deadlocked on a similar case against the California Teachers Association.

If Gorsuch breaks the tie as expected, public employee unions in California will not be able to count on collecting some form of dues from everyone they represent. Unions that operate in

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both “right to work” and “fair share” states say the shift could drive down membership by 15 percent to 30 percent.

“It’s not right that an employee who would pay nothing to the union for representation would still receive all the benefits from the collective bargaining process,” said Steve Crouch, director of public employees for International Union of Operating Engineers. His union represents maintenance workers in California and in right-to-work Nevada.

Public employee unions may have to shift to a model already used by California’s private sector unions that centers on motivating people to opt in to union membership even though they don’t have to. The model works for groups like the California Medical Association and the 400,000-member State Building and Construction Trades Council.

“I think the public employees in the end will figure it out that they need a voice up here because there’s going to be a lot of voices against them,” said Robbie Hunter, president of the trades union.

Leaning on lawmakers

California unions worked the halls of the Legislature this year to give them a hand in solidifying their membership just in case the Supreme Court strikes down their fair-share fees.

One new law guarantees unions the right to meet with new public employees almost as soon as they start their jobs. Another bans public agencies from releasing private phone numbers and email addresses of workers, information that could be used by anti-union groups to persuade people to quit their bargaining groups.

Union leaders say the law that gives them access to new employee orientation is particularly significant.

The union that represents California Highway Patrol officers, for instance, has an opportunity to meet new cops as they graduate from their academy. That gives officers a shared identity that helps translate to high union membership. The California Association of Highway Patrolmen does not charge fair-share fees, and its membership rate is north of 97 percent.

Peralta’s 10th Annual Medicare Enrollment Drive & Retirement Readiness Campaign

The Medicare open enrollment period is from January 1 until March 31, 2018. The District will host an event on **Wednesday, February 14** for all active and retired employees who are eligible for Medicare. Note: all PCCD employees who retired on or after July 1, 2004, are *required* to enroll in Medicare if they are eligible for the federal program in order to keep their Peralta benefits.

The event will be held in the **District Office** from **9:00 AM to 4:00 PM** and will include mini workshops with STRS, PERS, Teacher’s Pension and Insurance Services, Social Security, Medicare and more.

In addition, Kaiser, Delta Dental, VSP, United Healthcare Dental and CoreSource will be set up in the atrium for the entire day so people can drop in anytime.

Meet Cody Pelletier, Interim Peralta District Benefits Manager

At a recent PCCD Board Meeting, trustees named Cody Pelletier as the Interim Manager for the Peralta Benefits Department through June 2018. His name may sound familiar, because Cody worked in Peralta's Human Resource (HR) Department for five years as a Senior HR Analyst.

I sat down with Cody to learn how he came to this role and to ask about his goals for the Benefits Department. —Ed.

Helene Maxwell: Cody, welcome back to Peralta. Would you like to talk briefly about your career path that led to your current position?

Cody Pelletier: My professional career has been in Human Resources and Benefits Management. After completing my degree in journalism at the University of Maine, I earned a certificate in Certified Employee Benefits. My first professional job, roughly twenty years ago, was at Health Care West as a Benefits Analyst. Subsequently I was the Human Resources Manager at San Mateo Community College District for four years. From there I moved to Texas University of Houston for four years as HR/Benefits Manager. In 2011, I moved back to the Bay Area and was an analyst in Peralta's HR Department until 2016. I returned to Peralta in 2017 as Senior Employee Relations Analyst. Family responsibilities took me out of the country for a time. Now I'm happy to be back in Peralta in my new role.

HM: What are your goals for the Benefits Dept?

CP: As Acting Benefits Manager over the last few months, I've met with the Benefits Committee, staff within the Benefits Department, and other stakeholders, and there's widespread agreement that many changes are needed. The overarching goal is for the department to develop a more user-friendly, customer service orientation. Some examples include implementing consistent processes and procedures; replacing the current Benefits website with one that has easy access to pertinent information; developing a dynamic communications method, including revision of the Benefits

newsletter; and creating clear step-by-step forms.

For the website, I'd like to establish a working group to identify the elements that are needed to make the site usable. Anyone who is interested in participating in that group can email me at cpelletier@peralta.edu or call 510-587-7868.

HM: What's the best way for people to voice questions or concerns about benefits?

CP: I understand that people may have been frustrated in the past. My goal is to increase confidence in the Benefits Department over time.

For anyone who has specific questions about their benefits, the best way to get information and guidance is to send an email to benefits@peralta.edu. Those messages go to the Benefits Assistants Cheryl Meares and Ronnie Roberts-McCain, and to me, and from there each of us responds in the areas we're most knowledgeable.

HM: A question has arisen in the past about whether one unstated goal of the Benefits Department has been to hold down costs rather than be wholly committed to ensuring that faculty and staff have full access to the benefits they're entitled to. How would you respond?

CP: Our job in Benefits is to make sure that members are knowledgeable about available services and to facilitate access. Deferring use of health-care resources is not smart in the long run, for the individual or the district. The best way both to improve health of members, and simultaneously hold the line on costs, is for everyone to seek medical assistance promptly, rather than wait until complications develop. Our role is to do all we can to encourage members to do just that.



Cody Pelletier meeting with PRO Board.

Their Dreams are Our Dreams

By Barbara Dunsheath
faculty member at East Los Angeles College

From the *Journal of the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC) Winter 2018*

On September 8, 2017, Natacha recited, “I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands...”

Simple words for many of us, but a huge step for Natacha – once one of Deferred Action for Child-



hood Arrival (DACA) students in California who, after many years, was able to navigate the system, graduate from Fullerton College and California State University Fullerton, and become a U.S. citizen.

I first wrote about Natacha in 2012 using a pseudonym, Carmen, when President Obama first initiated the DACA program by executive order. In September 2017, President Trump rescinded that order. It seems fitting to provide an update about her today while Congress debates the future for 800,000 DACA recipients nationwide.

Natacha is a close friend of my family, and my connection with her transcends all the political viewpoints of Washington, D.C., and Sacramento. Her plight is of one courageous young woman and her family, who are simply trying to find a way to live and work in the United States without fear.

Five years ago, I wrote about Natacha, “When I came to this country in 2001 I knew how to say ‘yellow’ and ‘how are you?’ I was in eighth grade in Argentina and moved over Christmas break. In Argentina, they taught English, but of course,

it was taught by people who didn’t know English well. When I first came, I heard sounds, but I didn’t know what they were saying.”

“My Dad had come earlier on a business visa. He called right after September 11 and told my mom that we [Natacha age 13, her mom, and sister age 6] had to get here right away before they [the U.S.] wouldn’t let us in anymore. I carried my whole life in my backpack.”

Natacha, like many Dreamers, attended a community college after high school graduation. It was the only educational path open to her at the time. Even still, many hurdles lay across her path. Natacha says that being undocumented is like living in a bubble. “There is a little could hanging over you. I had to deal with it every day of my life.”

“The more I invested in building my life, the more I had to lose,” she stated. “I never had an answer if I could stay permanently. Even though I was accomplishing things, like graduating and getting a job, I didn’t know if I could keep those things.”

Natacha, a photography and graphic arts major, created an exhibit in her senior year about the various

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DACA Timeline

In California, 242,339 young people have received DACA status between 2012 and March, 2017, according to the **Migration Policy Institute**. Officials estimate that 72,300 undocumented students are enrolled at the state’s public colleges and universities (60,000 at community colleges, 8,300 at Cal State and 4,000 at UC) and that half probably have DACA protection now. Nationwide, about 800,000 young people have received DACA status.

On September 5, 2017, the Trump Administration officially rescinded the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. Congress has until March 5, 2018, to fashion a permanent solution before existing DACA permits expire.

(The Meaning of DACA...Continued from page 7)

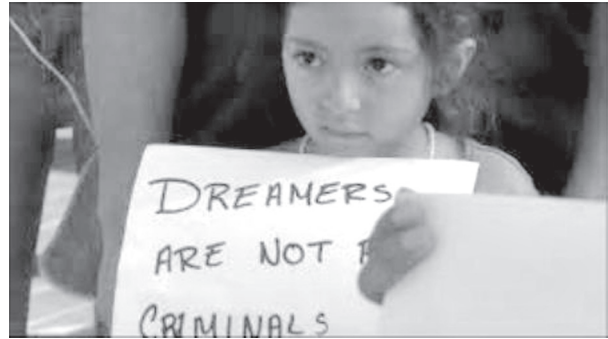
discriminations she encountered due to her accent and skin color. One piece was a picture of her sitting in front of the library at Fullerton College draped in red fabric. The red depicted her anger at the system for numerous slights, such as the financial aid office questioning her about not having a Social Security number when she asked about scholarship opportunities because she was not eligible to apply for the FAFSA, or the members of the church she attend-



ed advising her not to pursue her education.

Natacha elaborates further, “There were lots of misconceptions along the way that I couldn’t accept. Fortunately, my family supported me and encouraged me to continue. Other kids might have listened to this ill-advice.”

Under the provisions of President Obama’s executive order on DACA, Natacha was able to graduate from CSU Fullerton and find full-time



employment in her field. She currently works as an e-commerce product photographer in Irvine. Through various legal means, 14 years of bureaucratic red tape, and over \$20,000 in legal fees, Natacha has become a U.S. citizen.

With tears in her eyes and a quiver in her voice, she shared with me what this meant. “I can be free. Sometimes people who are born here think the government is corrupt and not fair; many countries are that way. DACA, and eventually citizenship, allowed me to take a deep breath. It means freedom for me and any generation that comes after me will have a better chance. It has changed the history of my family. It takes that one moment in your life to change one’s destiny.

Finally, the ominous cloud has lifted.

As the nation continues to navigate through the political debate on immigration reform, it is easy to lose sight of the individual lives that the policies impact. If you met Natacha, I am certain you would love her as I do. You would welcome her into your home and make a place for her at your dinner table. Certainly, you would have cried tears of joy when she stood at the Santa Ana Courthouse, placed her right hand over her heart, and recited the pledge of allegiance.

We must all advocate alongside the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, FACCC, the Community College League of California, faculty unions, and senates, and all other civil rights organization to urge Congress to codify the protections contained within the DACA Program. In doing so, we will allow thousands of California “Dreamers” to achieve their highest potential.

Contributions Received for the PRO Scholarship Fund

In Memory of:	Contributor(s)
Bernard Karne	Mary Karne
Ed Jaramillo	Sue Chin
Sheryl Queen	Nancy Delaney River
Mary Logan	Nancy Delaney River
Jose Pena	Nancy Delaney River
Jenette Golds	Nancy Delaney River
Patricia Russ	Nancy Delaney River
Vic Japzon	Barbara and Tom Southworth
Vic Japzon	Rita Haberlin
In Honor of:	Contributor
Shirley Nedham	Catherine Crystal
Bruce Jacobs	Catherine Crystal

PRO's Annual Meeting and Lunch

PRO's annual membership meeting and luncheon on November 9 was held at the Fairview Metropolitan Banquet Center adjacent to the Oakland International Airport. PRO Board member John Lodato organized the event with assistance from PRO Treasurer Anna Pavelka-Lodato. The Glen Pearson Ensemble played fabulous jazz throughout the afternoon. See below for photos from the event.



Debby Weintraub and Peralta Trustee Julina Bonilla



John Lodato, Elaine Chen-Ramirez, Anna Pavelka-Lodato



Pat Jameson and Jimmy Cato



Shirley Coaston, Carole Rodgers, Myrtle Bennett



Back Row: Joe Castro, Linda Japzon, Elaine Chen-Ramirez, Pat Jameson
Front Row: Ingrid Dalisay, Telly Castro, Toni Lesperance, Doris Kogo



Tom Turman, Helen Bersie, Chris Hadley

New Medicare Cards Are Arriving Starting April

Medicare will mail new Medicare cards between April 2018 and April 2019, using new Medicare numbers, rather than Social Security numbers, for identification. Removing SSN's from the card will help to protect users' identity. Medicare coverage and benefits will stay the same.

Medicare will never ask you to give personal information to receive your new number and card. Scam artists may try to get that

information by contacting you. Don't fall for it. If your card is ever lost or stolen, ask for a replacement from Social Security.

Medicare is managed by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS.) Social Security works with CMS by enrolling people in Medicare. For details call 1-800-772-1213 M-F from 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM, visit your local Social Security office, or Google Medicare Card.

Welcome New Members

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

**Gail Houghton
Charlene Maney-Spinola**

IN MEMORIAM

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

**Phyllis Jones
Arthur Kessner**

If you have any information about the passing or the serious illness of a Peralta retiree, please contact Helene Maxwell at: helenemaxwell3@gmail.com or by writing to PRO, 1250-I Newell Ave., #162, Walnut Creek, CA 94596

**Peralta Retirees Organization
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