

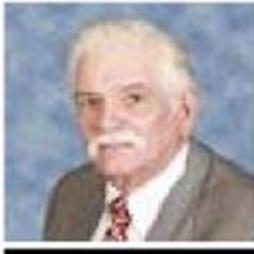


# THE INTERCOM

Newsletter of the California Retired  
County Employees Association (CRCEA)  
April 2018

[www.crcea.org](http://www.crcea.org)

Issue #2-2018



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

What a start to the New Year. There were the fires early on. Then came the rains and the devastation that resulted from that. Just as there appeared to be some sort of recovery from that, a new set of storms is brewing raising the issue again in those areas. No one can predict whether there will be reason for worry or whether the weather gods will smile and grant them a pass.

Through all of this, the folks in Santa Barbara County have continued to go about their task(s) of preparing for the upcoming conference in April. Once again, our CRCEA local members have shown their dedication to both their association and the state organization.

This quarter has kept your Executive Committee busy. Conversations and meetings with individuals and associations continue to ensure that there is a coordination of information and coordination when dealing with the myriad issues that may impact retirees. As mentioned above, the work being done in preparation for the April conference, and the review and direction by the Executive Committee (primarily Mike Sloan and Virginia Adams), keep all the parties busy. But, I guess "that's what we signed up for".

The California Legislature is back in session and is working on the "left overs" from the previous year, as well as any new ideas that may have come up before the end of February. No new bills can be introduced at this point, but who knows what kind of amendments might be substituted in to existing bills. Several items were held over for the second half of the 2-year session including a couple of bills that would impact pensions by Senator Moorlach of Orange County. They were pulled

from hearings in the fall, but very well will attempt to move forward. While some don't think they will pass, a keen eye on all of this will be maintained by us and our consultant.

I think that our upcoming conference in Santa Barbara County will be a time for discussion on many of these issues as we review what is going on in Sacramento. Even though our consultant won't be with us, her input and comments will be passed along as we review what the current state is.

The CalPERS LTC issue is slowly moving forward. Slowly being the operative word. Dave Muir from Los Angeles County is monitoring the matter for us and will keep everyone updated as appropriate. The pensions cases from Marin County, Alameda County, and CalPERS have shown that there are mixed feelings in the Appellate Courts and that the State Supreme Court will now have the final review and decision. How broad or how narrow the decision might be is anyone's guess.

*continued on Page 2*



As I have said often, we continue to keep our eyes and ears open to what is or is not going on. I received a call from Retired Employees of Kern County (REOKC) President John DeMario advising that the county was going to try to get legislation that would eliminate the Supplemental Retiree Benefits Reserve (SRBR) account and move the money set aside for retirees back to the County. As of the last day for new legislation, that was not present. But, as I said earlier, it could be attempted by amendment to existing legislation. One of those issues we will keep an eye out for.

Back to conferences, our next Spring Conference in April will be in beautiful Santa Barbara. The venue (Fess Parker Double Tree) is a great location. It will probably fill up fast. If you haven't made your registration yet, time is getting short. Check out our website for all the information you need to make a reservation. Some of us already registered received an email from our host county that there will be a Sunday evening bus trip to a local casino.

Once again, this is a recording - so it repeats and repeats. Not even so much as a change of wording. CRCEA continues to reach

out for Affiliates. Those are businesses that provide services to retirees or otherwise support public employees and retirees that we can approach to be Affiliates of CRCEA. All of our Affiliates believe they have something of benefit for your members, and the local associations will be looking at each of them to evaluate at the local level. You can check on the basic information on each at our website under the Affiliate tab. If you have a question on their service/product, do not hesitate to give them a call in order to see if that Affiliate can be of benefit to your association. As always, if anyone has any idea or potential Affiliate that would be of benefit to CRCEA and its members, give Mike Sloan, or any Executive Committee member, the information and we will follow up.

Now is the time to try to increase our local association membership rolls. March is usually a high retirement month, with many retiring in order to get a potential COLA increase on April 1 (no it's not a joke). Try to make an effort to get those newly retired (and the long time retirees as well) to join your local association. Clearly our dues are much lower than the dues they paid while work-

ing, and a simple reminder that your association is looking out for their continued peace of mind in retirement.

In closing, I will ask a favor of all of those that will be attending the conference. Bring your thoughts and ideas with you. Exchange that information with different attendees. Let's have some discussion during our Roundtable time. Through all this exchange, discussion and/or debate, something good can happen.

Until next time.....



SKIP MURPHY, President

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### **Good Reminders for Safety Tips**

- Get to know your neighbors.
- Check in periodically with friends.
- Install motion sensor lights and timers.
- Prepare for emergencies:
  - \* Install smoke alarms
  - \* Keep smoke alarm batteries current.
  - \* Keep stairways and entrances clear and free of clutter.
  - \* Stock extra canned food, bottled water, matches, batteries.
- Make sure you know local police/fire telephone numbers in addition to 911.

**NEW CALIFORNIA LAWS  
FOR 2018  
by Mike Sloan**

For someone to be truly safe, they must know the laws of the land, and when you live in California, keeping up with changes in the law can be a full time job. In 2017 the legislature passed over 800 laws dealing with everything from broken parking meters to legalizing a drug.

Here are some of the laws which were passed last year, and most went into effect on January 1. For further information, you can "Google" new laws in California.

I try to do this every year for our HOA newsletter, and usually post it in the CCCREA newsletter as well. This is very public information, so if you would like to reprint this in your Association's newsletter, please do so with my blessing.

**MARIJUANA** - Now licensed dispensaries can legally sell recreational marijuana to adults 21 years and older. About four dozen dispensaries are licensed by the state to sell marijuana for recreational use, with many other retailers expected to receive licenses in 2018.

**ILLEGAL TO SMOKE MARIJUANA WHILE DRIV-**

**ING** - The state updated its laws to keep up with new marijuana regulations, making it illegal to smoke or ingest pot while driving or riding in a car.

**BROKEN PARKING METERS** - A new state law in 2018 now allows drivers to park at broken parking meters ticket-free. The new law states that even if the credit card part of the meter is working but the coin part of the meter is jammed, you can still park in the spot without getting a ticket. According to the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association, in 2014 alone, drivers were dinged with \$165 million in broken-meter tickets.

However a group called the California Public Parking Association opposes the law. The group believes the new rule could make the parking crunch worse, and says the change could lead to vandalism.

**SANCTUARY STATE** - Another significant state law bars local law enforcement officers from cooperating with the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency on deportations, except in cases in which immigrants had been convicted of certain crimes. Officers will also be barred from asking about a person's immigration status.

**PEDESTRIAN CROSS-WALK VIOLATIONS** - Pedestrians will have more leeway when crossing the street, after the state did away with a Penal Code section that prohibited people from entering a crosswalk if the countdown signal had already started. Those out for a stroll now can enter the crosswalk during the countdown as long as they cross safely before it finishes. This is a law that few people knew about unless they had received a ticket.

**REFINANCING A MORTGAGE** - Refinancing your mortgage just got a little more expensive. The housing crunch is hitting Californians hard, and lawmakers responded this year with 15 housing bills meant to spur affordable housing development and rent subsidies. To pay for some of the housing relief programs, the state has added a fee of \$75 to \$225 on real estate transactions, such as refinancing.

**INGREDIENT LABELS FOR CLEANING PRODUCTS** - California will be the first state to require ingredient labeling on cleaning products used in homes, schools and workplaces.

**MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE** - The state's minimum wage will increase by 50 cents to \$11 an hour at

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workplaces with 26 or more employees and to \$10.50 at smaller companies. The increase is part of a law passed two years ago to raise the minimum wage to \$15 by 2023 for all workers.

**EMPLOYERS CANNOT ASK ABOUT PAY AT PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT -**

Prospective employers cannot ask how much you make at your current or previous job, a provision meant to ensure lower paid workers, who tend to be women and minorities, won't have their salary history continue to keep them underpaid.

**STATE COLLEGES TUITION FREE FOR THE FIRST YEAR -**

The first year of community college will be free in California for first-time students. However, there does not seem to be the funding for this program at this time.

**NO CONCEALED WEAPONS ON SCHOOL GROUNDS -**

School district officials will no longer be able to decide whether teachers, and other employees with concealed weapon permits, will be allowed to bring their guns onto campus.

**ALCOHOL RESTRICTIONS FOR UBER AND LYFT DRIVERS -**

Uber, Lyft, and other hired drivers will be

held to a higher standard when it comes to drinking and driving. Those drivers cannot have a blood alcohol concentration level of 0.04 percent or more when a paying passenger is in their car. This is half the limit for those not providing for hire services (0.08).

**SEAT BELTS ON A BUS -**

Passengers riding in a bus that is equipped seat belts will have to use them beginning July 1. (I am not sure how they will enforce this one.)

**HIGHER GAS TAXES AND VEHICLE REGISTRATION FEES -**

On January 1, the price of gasoline increased by 12 cents a gallon, and the cost of registering a vehicle will increase between \$25 and \$175 based on a car's current value. **(Note: An initiative to repeal the above law may be filed in 2018 - Carl DeMaio is leading an effort to place a constitutional amendment on the ballot that would repeal the tax and fee hikes, and prevent future increases without a state-wide vote of approval.)**

**CALIFORNIA NOW HAS A STATE DINOSAUR -**

California has a state bird, flower, fossil, and fabric. Now, the state has an official state dinosaur. The *Au gustynolophus morrisi* was a

duck-billed, plant-eating dinosaur, whose remains have only been found in California.

**GENDER SPECIFIC DRIVER'S LICENSES ELIMINATED -**

Californians who do not identify as male or female will have to wait until 2019 to be given a third option for listing their gender on driver's licenses and birth certificates. Beginning in 2019, driver's licenses will have three options for sex: male, female, and non-binary.

**PET STORE MAY NOW ONLY SELL RESCUE ANIMALS -**

Pet stores in California will be allowed to sell only rescue and shelter dogs, cats and rabbits. The bill goes into effect January 1, 2019.

**CREDIT CARD SURCHARGES AT BUSINESSES -**

A federal appeals court says California can't prevent businesses from charging additional fees to customers who use credit cards. The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that a 1985 state law, which banned credit card surcharges, violated the businesses' free speech rights.

**DISABLED PERSON PARKING PLACARDS AND PLATES -**

This law makes changes to the ad-

ministration of the Disabled Person Parking Placard and Disabled Person License Plate Program, including requiring applicants to provide proof of true full name and birthdate. The law also will limit the number of replacement disabled person parking placards an applicant can request, without obtaining a medical certification, to four in two years. It also requires the DMV to establish a renewal process that requires applicants to return a renewal notice by mail every six years. Currently, all permanent disabled placards will expire in June 2019, and they are automatically renewed every two years. The placards which will expire in June 2023 will be the first batch of placards subject to this renewal process. The new process will not require current applicants obtain a medical certification as part of the renewal. For more information about the new law effecting Disabled Person Placard and Plates, visit the DMV website.

**ELECTIONS** - Get ready for a new era of voting in California: Senate Bill 450, which passed in 2016, does away with neighborhood polling places and replaces them with elections conducted primarily by mail. It represents another effort to boost sagging voter participation. Under the new sys-

tem, every registered voter will receive a mail ballot. Drop-off locations will be available up to four weeks before Election Day, and temporary regional "vote centers" will open 10 days ahead of time to register voters and accept ballots.

**Membership — Reminders  
by Rhonda Biese-meier**

Thank you to those of you who have already responded to my February request for your Association's responses to the Membership Recruitment & Retention Guide! To those of you who have not yet replied, I can still accept your information.

By now, you should have received the semi-annual request for the Membership Survey.

In order to compile the information in advance of the Spring Conference, please send your Association's responses to **BOTH** surveys to me **NO LATER THAN FRIDAY, APRIL 6**.

Please contact me should you have questions:  
rhoneb@att.net



**CRCEA  
Conferences**

Spring 2018  
Santa Barbara (RESBC)

Fall 2018  
Marin (MCARE)

Spring 2019  
San Diego (RESDC)

Fall 2019  
Sonoma/Mendocino  
(SCARE/AMCRE)

Spring 2020  
Tulare (TCREA)

Fall 2020  
Stanislaus/Merced  
(RESCO/REMCO)

Spring 2021  
Los Angeles (RELAC)

Fall 2021  
Fresno (REFCO)

Spring 2022  
Orange (REAOC)

Fall 2022  
Sacramento (SCREA)

**WE HOPE YOU WILL BE  
ABLE TO JOIN US FOR  
GREAT INFORMATION,  
NETWORKING, AND, OR  
COURSE, FUN!**



**Having Issues with a Hospital Stay? Speak up!**

My dad was in excruciating pain so my mom rushed him to the emergency room of a renowned university hospital.

Doctors determined that he needed surgery that night, and luckily I was able to fly in and see him before he was wheeled away. "Take care of your mom if anything happens to me," he said as my mom and I wept.

Thankfully, my dad made it through. But he had to spend 11 days recovering in the hospital, a place he now equates with prison. One night, he suffered for five hours, desperately calling for help after his pain meds had run out. A nurse's aide stationed in his room had fallen asleep.

"I called on the intercom so many times, and nobody showed up," he recounts.

That was just one of the many failures in care that we encountered during my dad's stay. Others included inconsistent nursing quality, waiting all day for doctors to respond to pages, insensitive communication of bad news, trying in vain to reduce noise levels so my dad could sleep, and so much more.

Unfortunately, this happens to a lot of people. "Everything you hear these days is about patient-centered care, this and that," says Terry Bay, who owns a Casper, Wyo.-based business that provides advocacy services to older patients. But "we don't live in a patient-centered healthcare environment."

Today I'm going to offer advice for you in case you — or a loved one — lands in a hospital.

There are state and federal laws that cover, among other things, your rights to privacy, nondiscrimination, language interpretation and visitation, says Lois Richardson, vice president and legal counsel of the California Hospital Association.

But beyond legal protections, there are people you can talk to and steps you can take to improve your situation if you feel you're not getting the care you deserve. And patients' opinions do count.

"All hospitals increasingly are being scored and paid based on patient and family satisfaction scores," says Rebecca Kirch, an executive vice president with the National Patient Advocate

Foundation. "There is power in the people."

That power starts with a few simple things.

First, make sure a spouse, child, family member or friend — anyone concerned for your well-being — can spend time with you in the hospital and be your advocate. You cannot do it by yourself while you're in pain, medicated and not thinking clearly.

"It's having someone else in your court, someone who can check in and make sure your questions are being answered," says Dr. Rebecca Sudore, a geriatrician and palliative care physician at UC San Francisco.

Before you or your advocate speaks to your nurse or doctor, write down your questions. Keep track of your glasses, hearing aids and dentures — the personal belongings that most often go missing in hospitals, Sudore says.

"How can someone speak up for themselves if they can't see someone? Or can't hear?" she asks.

When the time comes to ask questions — or express frustration — don't be afraid to speak up. You

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have every right, even though it can feel intimidating to question your doctors or complain about your nurses.

“You can say, ‘No, I don’t want to go for that test. I want to speak to my daughter first,’” Bay says.

If you’re getting jostled out of sleep for a blood draw or blood-pressure check in the middle of the night, ask your doctor the next day if it’s really necessary. Often, it can wait till early morning, says Julie Morath, president and chief executive of the Hospital Quality Institute.

“It’s up to us to put our own humanity back into decisions,” Sudore says.

But here’s where speaking up can get thorny.

Let’s say you don’t feel you’re getting adequate care or you’re unhappy with how you’re being treated. You can start with your nurse, but if that’s uncomfortable — perhaps because that nurse is the source of the problem — approach the charge nurse, who manages the staff in your unit.

You can also ask to talk to a hospital-based social worker, who can intercede or help you figure out who to talk to, Kirch says.

If that doesn’t help, take your complaints to the next level.

Every hospital that participates in the Medicare program — which is most — must have an ombudsman or patient rights advocate, Richardson says. My mom and I eventually complained to the patient rights advocate. It helped, and we wish we had done it sooner.

If you can’t go to the patient rights advocate yourself, “you can call them or ask your nurse to call them and have them come up to your room,” Richardson says. Hospitals must acknowledge patient complaints immediately, she says, and must respond in writing once they are resolved.

As part of this process, no matter whom you talk to, there are some phrases that can spur quick action, Kirch explains. One is: “This doesn’t feel like quality care to me.” Another: “I see my loved one suffering.”

If you have a serious illness and you’re suffering from symptoms that aren’t being managed correctly, you can also request a consultation with a palliative care team. Palliative care isn’t only about end-of-life issues, it’s

about quality of life, Kirch says.

Most large hospitals have a multidisciplinary team of doctors, nurses, social workers, chaplains and others who can provide added support on top of the medical treatment you’re receiving, especially if you’re getting shuffled between medical specialties.

“They can help tremendously to fill in the blanks ... It can be pain management. It can be spiritual or psychological distress,” Kirch says. “The palliative care team treats the person beyond the disease.”

If you have done all that and still have concerns, Kirch’s organization has case managers who provide free, one-on-one support for patients. Call 800-532-5274 for more information or visit:

[patientadvocate.org/help.php](http://patientadvocate.org/help.php).

To be clear, I’m not suggesting you complain about every little thing. Be realistic. A hospital doctor may see up to 30 patients a day. So you might have to wait for your page to be answered unless you have a serious, potentially life-threatening problem, Sudore says.

"It may not be that you're being ignored. It might be that someone has to figure out the competing priorities," she says.

And don't forget that your caregivers are human too, Morath advises. "They get tired, they get stressed," she says. "Very often, just letting them know you're not getting what you need and asking for their help ... is a very powerful act."

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### Crock Pot Candy

2 lbs white chocolate candy coating  
6 oz white chocolate baking bar  
12 oz white chocolate chips  
3 cups peanuts, salted or unsalted as desired  
2½ cups small pretzel twists, broken  
Optional: 1 cup candy coated pieces, crushed peppermint, caramel bits, M&Ms, etc.

### Instructions:

Place white chocolate in a crock pot that has been set on low. Heat chocolate for 1½ hours until melted. Stir often.

Stir in peanuts, pretzels, candy until incorporated. Drop by spoonfuls into mini baking cups. Allow candy to set for at least an hour.

If chocolate becomes thick, stir in a teaspoon of vegetable oil.

Makes 96 - Enjoy!

[www.lemonsforlulu.com](http://www.lemonsforlulu.com)



"Spring won't let me stay in this house any longer! I must get out and breathe the air deeply again."

~~Gustav Mahler



### Did You Know?

Heat leftover pizza in a skillet on top of the stove; heat set to medium/low. This will crisp the crust; no more soggy microwave pizza.

Packing tip — store shoes inside shower caps to keep dirty soles from rubbing on clothes.

Walking across floors in the winter, and reaching for a door handle, can give you a shock. Place a dryer sheet inside your sock, or in your shoe. No more shocks!

For a good, inexpensive, facial scrub and exfoliant, add a pinch of sugar to your regular facial cleanser.

For difficult to clean items with narrow-necks, and hard to reach places, drop two Alka-Seltzer tablets in, add hot water, and swish it around until the tablets dissolve. Let sit for an hour. Rinse, and the glass jar, vase, or Thermos will be as clean as new.

Ease cast-iron cleanup by pouring some club soda in the pan while it's still warm. The bubbly soda will keep the mess from sticking.

Make pancakes and waffles lighter and fluffier by substituting club soda for the liquid called for in the recipe.

Fresh basil keeps much better, and longer, at room temperature with the stems in water.

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