

Standing Room Only

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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Pension Initiative Qualifies for Signature

A sweeping measure that would curb pensions for current government employees, retirees and future hires has been given approval to collect signatures to qualify it for a statewide vote.

The "**Pension Solvency Act**" would take effect immediately upon voter approval and apply to all California public pension systems. The provisions include:

- Strips all forms of compensation except base pay from pension calculations.
- Sets a \$100,000 annual base pay cap for pension calculations.
- Imposes a "Diet-COLA" by cutting in half the cost-of-living-adjustments granted retirees when a pension system is less than 97 percent funded.
- Requires government employers pay their full annual obligations to their pension funds.
- Calls on state and federal authorities to investigate "Cal PERS Board of Directors, Cal PERS executives, and Cal PERS top-level management & investors" for a variety of crimes including fraud, interstate transportation of stolen property, RICO Act violations and more.
- Requires authorities investigate any public employee whose pay exceeds \$250,000 per year for the same crimes.
- Creates a "California Separate Private Employees' Retirement System" that mirrors the CalPERS system for private sector workers.

The measure's proponents **Ted Costa and Robert J. Matteoli** have until **Feb. 10** to collect the signatures of **504,760** registered voters get the measure on the ballot.

Costa launched the recall movement that pushed Gov. **Gray Davis** out of office. He's also CEO of Sacramento-based **People's Advocate, Inc.**

Pension Reality Check

An onslaught of inflammatory media reports and political rhetoric are exploiting public pensions as a lavish expense that taxpayers can't afford.

But here's the reality check: The average CalPERS member receives a pension of \$2,100 a month—for most classified employees it's less than \$1,200 a month. That's not a lot to live on in California!

Cutting our pensions along with other public employees will do almost nothing to help solve our current state budget problems. Retirement costs represent an extremely small fraction of the state budget. If we need to cut costs, the state should eliminate waste and fraud, not take away the pensions of school employees, firefighters, nurses and other hardworking Californians.

We didn't cause the state budget crisis. Blame should be placed where it belongs - on politicians, Wall Street greed and the impact of corporate abuses on the stock market.

CSEA Legal Referral Program

Workers' compensation

If you are injured on the job, you should first report the injury to your supervisor. After reporting the injury to your supervisor, you may also wish to call the CSEA Legal Referral Program to obtain the name of a [workers' compensation](#) attorney.

Criminal Legal Assistance Fund

There is a procedure whereby financial assistance (up to \$2,500) may be provided to a member in good standing alleged to have committed a criminal act while operating within the normal course and scope of his/her duties as an employee within a bargaining unit represented by CSEA.

Off-the-job legal referral

If you have a legal question or concern not related to your employment, CSEA has a Legal Referral Program you can call. As one of the benefits of CSEA membership, you may speak with an attorney in CSEA's Legal Department about non-employment matters for no charge. Simple legal questions may be answered over the phone. If the problem or concern requires the further assistance of an attorney, the Legal Referral Counsel may be able to provide you with the name of a local attorney who may be able to provide a free consultation and may also provide a special discount to CSEA members.

Legal Education Workshops

In addition to providing members with answers to simple legal questions, addressing members' legal concerns and providing attorney referrals, the Legal Referral Program provides educational workshops for members and retirees. These workshops are designed to assist CSEA members with various off-the-job legal topics.

Chapter News & Negotiations

This month's Chapter meeting was held at CEC. Once again, we had good attendance, with 20 total members in attendance. Two of the members attending were there for the first time. A large portion of the meeting was dedicated to discussion regarding grievances filed and procedural rules related to such, and the current state of negotiations.

To date, we have had two negotiating sessions. The most newsworthy item from these two meetings was the District's response to CSEA's request for necessary and relevant information regarding the cost to restore and retro-actively re-instate step & column, longevity, professional growth, and the 1.053% raise. This dollar amount, according to the figures received from the district, is approximately \$1.4 million dollars. Another hot topic for discussion was whether we will be getting the extra week off at Christmas. These issues are a top priority to the negotiating team, and we will address each of them with the district when we have all the information that we need to make the best argument possible. We are all anxious about negotiations, but we must try to exercise just a little more patience.

Workers Independent News—www.LaborRadio.org

Radio is a powerful force. More than 12,000 AM and FM stations broadcast to millions of listeners every day. But too often workers' interests are ignored.

If you listen to what's considered "business news" on the radio today, you'll hear lots about stock prices, corporate earnings, and profit/loss ratios - but nothing about the people that make commerce possible.

Workers Independent News (WIN) gathers news by and about working people and creates programs and feature stories for commercial, public, community and college radio stations throughout the United States.



I wanted to take the time to express my feelings about a subject dear to my heart. That is single payer healthcare.

We are currently in negotiations with the district over a variety of issues. But one issue comes up EVERY time—either indirectly or directly. And that is the skyrocketing cost of healthcare.

Can you imagine being able to see the doctor, dentist or other medical professional of your choice without the dreaded “co-pay” or other restrictions? Can you imagine it costing us less? Well, the attached article does a nice job of summing up single-payer, and I think that the last two paragraphs hit the complaints about single-payer on the head.

If we can get past the pension attacks in victory, and become more united, this issue will be a great cause for all unions to embrace and work towards passage into law.



SINGLE PAYER HEALTHCARE

Negotiating healthcare benefits for thousands of school employees every year has brought CSEA to the frontlines of our nation's healthcare crisis. We have seen the devastating effects of skyrocketing costs and reductions in overall quality. Now, it's time to look for a real solution that will provide our members with affordable quality healthcare.

CSEA is actively working with healthcare advocacy groups, members of the medical community and other labor unions who support a single-payer system as the best way to achieve real healthcare reform.

Single-payer system offers choice of physicians

Under a single-payer system, everyone would be covered for all medically necessary services, including: doctor, hospital, long-term care, mental health, dental vision, prescription drug and medical supply costs. Patients would regain free choice of doctor and hospital, and doctors would regain autonomy over patient care.

You get a lot more healthcare for your money in a single-payer system than from insurance companies. California currently has 10,000–20,000 public and private health insurance plans. It costs us 25–30 percent of every dollar to pay for insurance and drug company marketing, administration and profit. By eliminating waste and duplication, more money can be spent to provide actual medical care.

Current system devastating families and economy

The growing crisis in healthcare affects all of us. Last year, 2 million Americans went bankrupt because of medical bills and most of those people had health insurance. The price of health insurance is rising many times faster than wages and overall inflation—as much as 58 percent over the last five years. If health insurance continues to rise at double digits—which is predicted by most experts—family coverage will cost \$24,000–\$35,000 per year by 2014. Only the rich will be able to afford healthcare.

Employment is also adversely affected, because employers avoid creating jobs with benefits and expensive health insurance plans for existing employees are a drag on the bottom line. American corporations are finding it harder to compete in the global economy because health insurance is twice as expensive in the U.S. as it is in the other industrialized nations.

Combining resources will reduce cost

The main benefit of a single-payer system is in combining all of our financial resources together to get better control over health care spending and quality. By pooling together all of our current healthcare spending (public health programs and employer/employee premiums), we would have incredible purchasing power to negotiate with providers on cost and quality, and we could streamline administrative tasks. Doctors, hospitals and pharmacies currently have to navigate more than 6,000 insurance plans and 69 different government programs. With one independent agency to process and pay claims, providers will free up substantial time and resources to devote to medical care.

A Single Payer Healthcare System is not socialized medicine. While it would be publicly financed, *delivery* of health services would remain just like it is now—a market-based system in which patients get to choose their own doctors, hospitals and pharmacies. A single-payer system for health care will put medical decision-making back in the hands of medical professionals and their patients—unlike today's system where profit-driven insurance corporations decide what treatment a patient can get.

In the U.S., we have a publicly financed military to protect us. We have publicly financed police and fire to keep us safe. We have publicly funded education to educate all of our children. And by doing the same thing with healthcare—pooling all of our healthcare spending together—we can provide quality healthcare for all Californians.