



CONTRA COSTA COUNTY
RETIRED EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION, LOCAL ONE

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Representing the Past, Present & Future

July/August 2006

Public Employees Receive Reduced Social Security Benefits By Julia Jenkins, Legislative Director

The Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) aren't simple to explain. Congress adopted them in 1977 and 1983, to reduce federal budget deficits at the time and as a quick solution to pension "double dipping" abuses. Their unintended consequences have been hurting relatively low-paid public servants ever since.

In brief, here's how these provisions work. Social Security law prevents "dual entitlement"-or receipt of full Social Security and spousal benefits at the same time. In 1977, Congress began treating government pensions, such as those earned by city, county and school employees, as Social Security benefits. The effect of this change was a dollar for dollar reduction in Social Security survivor benefits for anyone also earning a public pension. In 1983, Congress amended the law to a two-thirds offset.

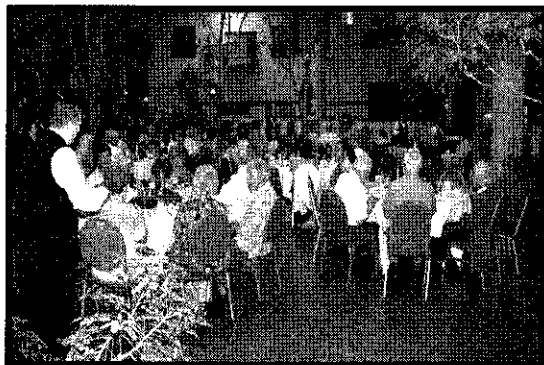
The WEP was enacted in 1983 to prevent people with relatively high-compensated government service jobs and relatively low-paying Social Security-covered employment from having an unfair advantage from a Social Security benefit formula designed to give low-wage workers a decent income upon retirement. However, the Social Security Administration does not consider what a public employee has earned when applying the formula. As a result, some workers pay the same percentage in payroll contribution of their Social Security -covered earnings as others, yet they are being penalized by this provision.

Nine out of ten public employees affected by the GPO lose their entire spousal benefit, even though their spouse paid Social Security taxes. Some 300,000 individuals lose an average of \$3,600 a year due to the GPO.

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Another Great Luncheon Hosted by the Crowne Plaza

The June Luncheon held on June 15th was a great success with 40 CCCREA members and guests in attendance. This was the first time that the luncheon was held at the new location of the Crowne Plaza. They did a wonderful job hosting the luncheon and at such a beautiful setting in the atrium. Eileen Kenyon was presented with an award for over 20 years of dedicated service to CCCREA during the luncheon. Hope to see you at the next luncheon in September. On page 2 is a recap of Marilyn Leedom's presentation from the luncheon.



Cont'd from page 2

The WEP causes hard-working people to lose a significant portion of the benefits they earned themselves. The WEP reduces the factor by which average earnings are multiplied to determine Social Security benefits. The amount of reduction depends on when the person retires and how many years of earnings he or she has accumulated. The reduction may be no more than one-half of the government pension to which the person is entitled. The maximum reduction was \$303 a month for 2004.

Congress can fix this problem. Local 1 strongly supports legislation to eliminate these WEP and GPO provisions. The Social Security Fairness Act, introduced as H.R. 147 by Representatives Buck McKeon (R-CA) and Howard Berman (D-CA) in the House and S. 619 by Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Susan Collins (R-ME) in the Senate will restore the full Social Security to public employees.

Both California Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein support this legislation and many of our California Representatives including Ellen Tauscher and George Miller support this legislation. Public employees must act now by contacting their legislators to ask them to make this legislation a priority. Please visit our Local 1 website at www.peu1.org to find out how you can help pass this legislation. (Instructions for finding your legislator. Go to www.peu1.org and look under Political Action and Find Your Legislator. There you will need to type in your zip code and the name and address of your legislator will pop up.)

Recap from the June Luncheon Regarding New Check Distribution

By Jacque Salvador

CCCREA invited Marilyn Leedom, Chief Executive Officer of Contra Costa County Employees Retirement Association to speak at our June luncheon. The main focus of her presentation was the newly improved computerized system that the Retirement Board has selected to monitor and track the pension of the County Retirees.

It is supposed to be a modernized system providing better service to retirees. Recently you received a letter from the retirement office asking you to update your information and make a choice regarding the account that your check is deposited to. It seems that this modern system is not able to issue more than one check for retirement benefits.

Now, as we all know, the Unions have negotiated numerous retirement tiers over the years resulting in members falling under two or more tiers. These tiers pay benefits separately and a lot of the members have received these benefit checks separately.

According to Ms. Leedom there will now be a single payment discontinuing multiple account distributions and having it all distributed into one bank account for all of your tiers. She did indicate that a payment to the Contra Costa Credit Union would be allowable as an option.

It appears that this change may create a great deal of inconvenience for members who have made financial arrangements by having more than one bank account. The Retirement Board needs to hear directly from those members who are concerned about the change and the impact on them. This is the only way you are going to get their attention and consideration to resolve this issue.

The mailing address is Contra Costa County Employees Retirement Association
Attn: Board of Director, 1355 Willow Way Ste 221, Concord, CA 94520, Phone 925-646-5741.



Mary Lou Williams,
President

President's Corner

Did you know that the School of Law at JFK University launched its first in-house Clinical Program for Seniors who have been financially abused? The Elder Law Clinic's mission is to provide access to free legal services to the low-income elderly populations 60 years of age or older of Alameda, Contra Costa and Solano Counties. This clinic specializes in pro bono legal services dedicated to financial abuse matters affecting the under-served elderly population of these counties. In addition, as the opportunity arises, clinic interns assist in drafting of and lobbying for legislation that protects seniors. An estimated 5000 - 6000 incidents of financial abuse against elders occur in these 3 Counties yearly.

If you feel that you, a loved one, or a friend may require the services of the Elder Law Council please call (925)-969-3341 or e-mail elderlaw@jfk.edu.

If you like to read and are homebound some of the local libraries have programs that will drive the books to your home. In Contra Costa County, library books can be delivered to your door by contacting Susan LaPat at (925) 927-3211 or e-mail at Slapat@ccclib.org. If you live in the Richmond area, there is Booking Around Town at the Richmond Library. The contact persons at the Richmond Library are Stephanie Kennedy or Kathy Haug at (510) 620-6561.

I have received no news regarding the County labor issues which include our health care. The Unions are still negotiating with the County for a fair contract. Until a new contract is signed our current health plan coverage is still in force.

I will be looking forward to talking with you at our 3rd Annual Picnic on August 10th. Maverick's BBQ will be catering it this year so there will be plenty. Please see the enclosed flyer for more details.

A plea to new members: consider attending one or more of our Board of Directors meetings with perhaps the intent of joining us. We're a fun group meeting only 7 times a year for about 2 hours. A lack of computer skills or access is no excuse for not joining us. If I can do it so can you.

Dates to save: September 14th and December 14th are luncheon dates. Those of you that dined with us at the June luncheon were very happy with our permanent move to the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Concord. The hotel staff went out of their way to accommodate us. For those of you that missed it we ate in The Atrium Court which is very beautiful and parking is abundant.

As always call or e-mail me with anything you need or pass on a compliment.

Happy Summer!

Special Political Action Opportunity for CCCREA Members!



We need your help for the November Election!

Local #1 is looking for a few people to assist with Political Action.

For CCCREA members, phone banks will be set-up on the 1st & 3rd Monday of each week from 10 am-2 pm starting in July.



Here's how you can help:

- ✓ Call our members who are unregistered to vote & ask them to register
- ✓ Call members to ask them to volunteer at phone banks and precinct walks
 - ✓ Call members to survey their interests
- ✓ Call members to ask them to vote for Local 1 endorsed candidates & initiatives
 - ✓ Write letters to legislators
 - ✓ Stuff Political Mailings

Please call the Local #1 office in Martinez at (925) 228-1600 if you are interested.

We will provide a light lunch for all volunteers!

The See's Candies Gift Certificates are in!

The cost of the gift certificates are \$12.10 per certificate for one pound of See's Candies. The Association is selling the gift certificates as a fundraiser for the 2009 Statewide Conference.

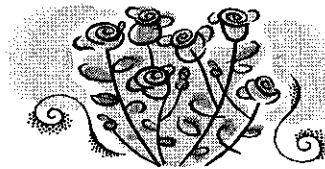
The proceeds will help to offset the cost of sponsoring the conference.

To Order Call Toll Free 1-800-585-0054

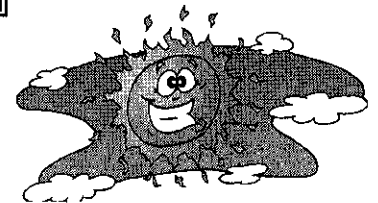
See's CANDIES

Welcome New Members!

Elizabeth Thompson
Retirement Date: 7-15-06



Health Tip: Keeping Cool as the Mercury Rises



Tips to help you save money while keeping your home cool this summer. The Federal Trade Commission has some tips that won't put you in a sweat. Additional information can be found at www.nea.org.

- Have your central air conditioning (AC) system serviced each spring. Your utility company may provide this service.
- Clean or replace AC and furnace filters once a month or as needed, and seal holes around plumbing and heating pipes.
- Install ceiling fans. The air circulation promotes cooling in the summer and heating efficiency in the winter.
- Open your foundation vents each spring if your home has a crawl space under it.
- Hire a professional to seal and insulate leaky ducts, and to ensure that the airflow distribution system serving your equipment is operating at peak efficiency.
- Prune back shrubs and remove debris, like grass and leaves that may block airflow to your air conditioner.
- Install a programmable thermostat. You can save money by keeping your house warmer than normal when you're out, and keeping the setting at 78 degrees when you're home.

See's Candies Gift Certificates

The Contra Costa County Retired Employees Association is selling the gift certificates as a fundraiser for the 2009 Statewide Conference for all '37 Act County Retirees. The proceeds will help to offset the cost of sponsoring the conference.

The cost of the gift certificates are \$12.10 per certificate for one pound of See's Candies.

Purchase yours today!

Name _____

Address _____ PH. NO. _____

City _____ ZIP _____

of Gift Certificates = _____

of Gift Certificates x \$12.10 = _____ total enclosed

Mail to:

Local 1, Attn: See's Candies PO Box 6783, Concord, CA 94524

Please allow 1—2 week turn around time for delivery

Call toll free 1-800-585-0054 for any questions.



See's
CANDIES

