Winter 2008

Ventura County Community College District Retirees' Association

The Monitor

President's Report by Rene Rodriguez

I am pleased to report that things are looking much better this year for retiree health benefits than they have since we began contesting the changes the District illegally and unilaterally made to our health benefits in July 2005.

A Very Important New Development for You

If you have been visiting our website (www.vcccdra.org), you already know that effective January 1, 2008, the out-of-pocket-maximum (OOPM) for mail-order prescriptions will be limited to $500 per individual, and $1,000 per family each calendar year. Prescription costs have been one of our major concerns, and this new provision will save thousands of dollars beginning this year for retirees who have been spending more than $500 per year on prescriptions. Therefore it is imperative that you enroll in this program as soon as possible, particularly if there is a chance that a member of your family will spend more than $500 in prescription drugs this year. Call Shelley Signor at 805-652-5514 on how to enroll or go to the website address http://www.vcccd.edu/hr/hr_benefits.htm to download enrollment forms and instructions for the District mail-order prescription plan. Please see Gary Johnson's report as chair of the Benefits Committee in this newsletter for more detail.

Payoff from Negotiations by the Association

This very important change to our health benefits has come about due to the negotiation efforts of retirees with the District. The last (third) proposal that the Retirees' Association made to the District contained a similar OOPM for prescription drugs. Not long after we made this proposal, the District and the bargaining units agreed to accept this new change to the District health benefit plans and becoming effective in January 2008.

However, as important as this new provision is to active employees and retirees, it will remain in effect only as long as the District and the bargaining units agree to keep it as part of their future contractual agreements.

This is one reason why the Retirees' Association has sued the District. Retirees should not have to depend on the future actions of the District with the bargaining units, and **by law**, bargaining units cannot bargain on behalf of retirees, and the District cannot unilaterally abrogate contracts/promises that it made to its retirees when they were active employees.

Thanks to the moral and financial support of individual retirees like yourself, the leadership of the Retirees' Association, especially the Benefits Committee, the Political Committee, and your Executive Board, has been able to maintain a strong, continuing effort towards resolving the health benefits issue with the District. The effort began more than a year ago with an attempt to negotiate a fair settlement. With little progress to show for all our efforts after months of negotiations, the Retirees' Association, filed a lawsuit against the District on August 31, 2007.

Progress with the Lawsuit

Since the filing of the lawsuit in August, the lawyers for the District requested a hearing in November 2007 in an attempt to invalidate our lawsuit and claim we are not entitled to attorney's fees and compensation for other costs. The judge overruled the demurrer and denied the District's motion to strike, thus leaving our claim against the District intact.

The next step in the process will be when our attorney, Tom Sharpe, asks that our lawsuit be certified as a class action suit. Also, depositions of selected retirees should begin soon to shed further light as to the promises that were made to retirees by the District regarding health benefits when they were active employees.

Annual General Meeting on March 12

Please note that the annual general meeting of the VCCCD Retirees Association will be held on March 12, 2008 (the second Wednesday in March) from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the Courtyard by Marriott at 600 E. Esplanade Drive in Oxnard, near the Vineyard Ave. exit off the 101 Freeway. Refreshments will be served. Please attend, visit your fellow retirees, and enjoy the program, which includes the following business items:

Bylaws Amendments

By this notice, at least 30 days before the annual general meeting, the Executive Board recommends to the membership present at the annual meeting on March 12 that the following articles in the bylaws be amended as shown below. The articles are shown as currently written with *proposed new language* presented in ***bold*** and *proposed deleted language shown in powder.*

ARTICLE V, Section 4. Voting for officers shall be by ***voice, or a showing of hands, by members in attendance at the annual general meeting, unless a*** *secret ballot* ***is called for and approved by a majority of those present.*** *However, members may vote by mail using an official ballot distributed by the Association. Members voting by mail must follow the instructions which will accompany the mail-in ballot. Secret ballots will be counted by the nominating committee.*

ARTICLE V, Section 2. The annual election of officers will be held at a general meeting held in the spring of each year on the third Wednesday of March, ***or the nearest Wednesday to this date depending on availability of accommodations****.*

ARTICLE V, Section 1. The Executive Board shall appoint a Nominating Committee which will present its recommendations at a ***its annual g****eneral meeting. each year. Nominations may be made by mail to the Chairperson of the Nominating Committee any time prior to the* ***annual general meeting*** *cutoff date established by the Chairperson,* ***or on the floor on the day of the annual general meeting.***

The Executive Board also recommends the following change to the bylaws in Article VIII which will classify the Benefits Committee, the Political Committee and the newly formed Membership Committee as "standing committees."

ARTICLE VIII – STANDING COMMITTEES The President shall appoint all committee chairpersons as the need for a committee arises. ***The Standing Committees for the association currently are the Benefits Committee, the Membership Committee and the Political Committee.***

Nominations and Election of Officers

All officers will have completed their terms on June 30, 2008, and new officers will need to be elected on March 12 to begin their terms on July 1, 2008. If you are interested in running for the office of president, vice president/newsletter editor, or secretary/treasurer, or wish to nominate someone for office, please email Nominating Committee Co-Chair John Woolley at vcccdra@yahoo.com

Other Positive Developments

1. Thanks to the efforts of Gary Morgan, chair of the Political Committee, we continue to meet on a regular, monthly basis with VCCCD trustee Steve Blum.

2. As a result of our negotiations, the District has invited us to be represented on the ASCC (Administrators, Supervisors, Confidential, Classified) District Health Benefits Committee. Gary Johnson has agreed to be that representative, and he attended his first meeting on January 10. As Gary's alternate to this committee, I attended (with Gary) an all day training session on January 16 sponsored by the District and some statewide risk management organizations. We'll have some interesting information to share with you at the general meeting on March 12. Please attend if you possibly can.

3. I am pleased to announce that Don Medley has accepted the chairmanship of the newly created Membership Committee. This will give Don, founder of the Retirees' Association, official status for all the work he continues to perform for the association

George McNeely's $25,000 Matching Pledge

The Monitor, Fall 2007, reported that George had pledged $25,000 as a Legal Fund matching fund challenge to the membership. In December, secretary/treasurer Vivian Lockard received a check for that amount which she has deposited to a separate bank account with George McNeely, Bob Long and Gary Johnson as signatories. We appreciate George's faith in our efforts, and Vivian will be reporting at the general meeting on March 12 how well our membership is facing up to this magnanimous challenge. Some of our members have already sent checks even though the request at this time has been for a pledge. Please keep those pledges and checks coming. A form is enclosed with this newsletter for this purpose. I'm hoping to be able to report that we have fully met George's challenge by March 12.

Thank You for Your Support

It has been a privilege to serve as your president over the last year and a half, and I look forward to continue serving on the Executive Board as the "immediate past president" after my two-year term is completed in June. Thank you for supporting the VCCCD Retirees' Association. You have made it possible for us to make important progress during this difficult period with the District. Please plan to attend the upcoming annual general meeting on March 12. We will have some very important business to conduct on behalf of the association as well as important information to share with you. Stay well and best regards to all

Rene G. Rodriguez
President, VCCCDRA

Benefits Committee Report by Gary Johnson

Since the District unilaterally changed the retiree health benefit plan in June 2005, the VCCCD Retirees Association has continually made a strong case to the Board and District that increased prescription co-pays are the most objectionable part of the plan change and place the most difficult financial stress on retirees.

We believe the District took a cue from our last negotiations counter offer in agreeing with both SEIU and AFT to incorporate a $500 out-of-pocket maximum (OOPM) enhancement in the mail order prescription plan associated with Blue Cross coverage.

Obviously this is a very important development, especially for the more than 340 individuals (45% of retirees and dependents) who have been exceeding $500 in annual prescription expenses. This $500 maximum limit to what retirees will have to pay out-of-pocket for mail-in prescriptions, while welcome, will last only as long as the District and bargaining units agree to keep it as part of their future negotiated agreements. One reason the Retirees Association sued the District is that the District has refused to agree to long-term limitations on retiree out-of-pocket health care costs. Retirees should not have to depend on the future actions of the District or settlements with the bargaining units, and **by law**, bargaining units cannot bargain on behalf of retirees. Furthermore, the District cannot unilaterally abrogate contracts/promises that it made to its retirees when they were active employees.

We urge retirees and dependents to fill prescriptions by mail, especially for those medications expected to be taken for three months or more. A large percentage of retirees are not ordering by mail and this new $500 out-of-pocket maximum (OOPM) will be decidedly to your advantage. Currently, 205 of you are spending between $500 and $1000 on prescriptions; 123 are spending $1000 to $2000; and 15 are spending between $2000 and $3500. The new limit can save retirees collectively more than $350,000. Call Shelley Signor at 805-652-5514 on how to enroll or go to the website address http://www.vcccd.edu/hr/hr_benefits.htm to download enrollment forms and instructions for the District mail-order prescription plan.

Whether or not you are spending over $500 annually for prescriptions, ordering prescriptions by mail provides you three months supply for the price of two, and over the course of a year that means four months of your prescriptions are free. Please request generic medications when available.

As retirees it is to our advantage to do everything we can to help keep District benefits costs contained.

District Benefits Committee

After a two-year exclusion and repeated retiree requests, the District has invited retiree representation on the Classified/Manager Benefits Committee and we expect soon to be added to the Faculty Benefits Committee. This is another welcome change and allows us to be part of the District health benefits decision and deliberation process.

Retiree Benefits Committee

Members of the Benefits Committee currently include Gary Johnson (chair), Rene Rodriguez, Harry Culotta, Dave Thomas, Gary Morgan, Vivian Lockard, Barbara Hoffman, Bob Lopez, Gil Ramirez, Stan Bowers, Bob Long, Don Medley, John Woolley, and Manny Turse.

Political Committee Report by Gary Morgan

Two seats on the VCCCD Board of Trustees will be up for election or re-election this November. Larry Miller, himself a retiree, has announced his candidacy for a second term to represent Area 3, the Camarillo-Santa Paula-Fillmore-Ojai area. Bob Huber, who is also completing his first term, has not formally announced his candidacy as of this writing, but he is also expected to seek re-election. Huber represents Area 4, the Simi Valley-Moorpark area (including a portion of Thousand Oaks).

As time for the election draws near, the Political Committee will interview all candidates for each seat and will then make a recommendation to the organization concerning whether or not to endorse one or more candidates.

Members of the Political Committee include Rene Rodriguez, Gary Johnson, Harry Culotta, Gil Ramirez, Barbara Hoffman, Larry Manson, and current chair Gary Morgan. If you know of someone who is planning to run for the board, please email Gary Morgan at vcccdra@yahoo.com to let the committee know.

Membership Update
by Don Medley

WE NEED ADDRESSES/PHONE NUMBERS/EMAIL ADDRESSES FOR THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE. If you can help call Don Medley at 805-482-8761 or email to don.medley@verizon.net. THANK YOU!

Betty Albiston	Donald Anderson	Charlene Arnold	Madaline Braun
Patricia Burkard	Rafel Carranza	Robert Chatenever	Christy Corbett
Patricia Earl	Jesse "Russ" Emory	Ruby Filar	Dallas Flanigan
Lynn Greig	Peter Gucciardo	Jose de Guzman	Rosalio Haro
Dandra Kinghorn	Teresa Lara	Nancy Lindsay	Joyce Lundy
Miacheal McGann	George Martinez	Diane Moore	Norlene Neal
Garland Orr	Della Rhodes	John Roach	Alicia Rosas
Barbara Smith	Talle E. Stanton	James Stemen	Myra Toth
Florencia Wallace	Gerald White	Ernest Williams	Louise Zitnik

Please correct your roster with the following address and/or telephone number changes:

Judy L. Alexander	Marge Corbell	Bea Epping
Delois Flowers	Pauline Stringer-Eilers	Marta Garza-Laird
John Hanft	Randy John	Harry Korn
Virginia Rutledge	Tom Stuebe	Elaine Wefel

Email address changes:

Barrett Culmback
Hugo & Linda Ekback
Paul Aiello

Email Address changes needed: Emails to these retirees have been returned as undeliverable.

Rita Beahan	Tom Everton	Hitoshi Kajijara	Rosalie Souza
Laura Campbell	Priscilla de Garcia	Virginia Lawler	Mary Taylor-Parr
Amando Castillo	Judith Gerhart	Rachel Santoyo	Suzanne Van Marian

IN MEMORIAM

We honor our dear colleague and
will always cherish her friendship

Ann Grace Bond

The Association's oldest retiree, George McNeely, has offered to match up to $25,000 in pledges from the membership to support the Legal Fund. When these pledges are followed-up with actual contributions, George is matching them dollar-for-dollar. Consequently, we are extremely proud to announce

The George McNeely Matching Pledge Drive

Many retirees have already donated in response to George's challenge. Will you be the next?

If you are unable to contribute today, consider making a pledge that can be fulfilled with a future contribution.

Please fill out below, sign and date.

Fold this page over in half, affix a 41¢ stamp, staple, and return as pre-addressed.

Name: (print) _____

I pledge to contribute the amount of _____ dollars, when needed, to support the lawsuit against the District.

_____ Signature

_____ Date

Winter 2008

Ventura County Community College District Retirees Association

Post Office Box 6216
Ventura, CA 93006-6216

Look for us on the Web at
http://www.vcccdra.org

Executive Board

Rene G. Rodriguez, President

Gary Johnson, Past President

Harry Culotta, Vice President

Vivian Lockard, Secretary-Treasurer

Benefits Committee

Gary Johnson, Chair

Membership Committee

Don Medley, Chair

Political Committee

Gary Morgan, Chair

Place 41 cent

Stamp here

VCCCD Retirees Association
P.O. Box 6216
Ventura, CA 93006-6216