

**SPOTLIGHT on Brian C. Brooks**

We are pleased to welcome Mr. Brian C. Brooks as the newly elected member of the Board of Investments. He was elected by the general members on August 22, 2000, and his official term is effective January 1, 2001 through December 31, 2003.

Mr. Brooks is strongly committed to serving both the active and retired members of LACERA.

**BRIAN C. BROOKS**

Since the election, he has been very busy learning the intricate aspects of the LACERA pension fund and the various laws and policies for investing LACERA trust funds. This will optimize his performance as a board member -- representing the best interests of all LACERA members while preserving the stability of the fund.

Mr. Brooks has a well-seasoned background as a County employee and public servant. In February 1966, he began working for the L.A. County Flood Control District but left in August 1966 to join the U.S. Army. While stationed in various states he served as an aircraft mechanic, and in 1968 he served in Vietnam.

After returning to the Flood Control District in 1969, he continued his college education and also completed training for a commercial pilot rating as well as a commercial rating in hot air balloons. He was a member of the Civil Air Patrol and held the rank of Captain and Mission Search Pilot.

At the Flood Control District, Mr. Brooks proceeded through the positions of Junior Engineering Aid, Engineering Aid II and III, Civil Engineering Technician, and Senior Civil Engineering Technician. In 1983 he began his career in Right of Way Appraisals. These appraisals include various types of commercial, industrial, and residential real property. Presently he holds the title of Valuation Engineer II. He is also a State Certified General Real Property Appraiser authorized to appraise any type of Real Estate. As an expert witness in eminent domain, Mr. Brooks provides appraisal information in depositions connected with all types of litigation cases in Los Angeles County Superior Court.

Later he became active in the International Right of Way organization where he served as Committee Chair and held various officer positions. He now proudly holds the title of Past President of Chapter One.

Mr. Brooks is a member of the California Association of Professional Employees (CAPE) where he previously served on the Board of Directors. He is also a member of the County Employees for Fair Retirement Plans (CEFRP), SEIU Local 660, the Chicano Employees Association, and the Los Angeles County Filipino Americans Association. He is a new associate member of the Retired Employees of Los Angeles County (RELAC).

Mr. Brooks would like to thank everyone who voted for him and looks forward to representing the interests of all LACERA members when his term begins on January 1, 2001. The retired members are especially important to him because one of them is his mother, Wilma C. Brooks.

Mr. Brooks has three adult children. He enjoys spending time with his wife, Jane, and two younger children who are still at home.

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**SPOTLIGHT** on William Pryor

William Pryor is the newly elected safety member on the Board of Retirement. He was elected by the safety members on August 22, 2000 to replace longtime board member Cody Ferguson, who recently retired. The board welcomed Mr. Pryor at his first official meeting on Sept. 6, 2000.

**WILLIAM PRYOR**

Since 1989 Mr. Pryor has been a firefighter. He started with the City of Hawthorne Fire Department which was annexed to L.A. County in 1997. He is currently assigned to the Willowbrook Fire Station as a firefighter/paramedic. This residential area keeps him very busy with many family house fires, paramedic calls, traffic

accidents, and the like. Although danger is always eminent in this job, he manages to maintain a calm and comforting demeanor to help those in distress. Mr. Pryor enjoys serving the people in the community and always strives to do his best to restore safety.

Mr. Pryor was also recently elected as a director on the Local 1014 Firefighter's Union. He is very aware of how important retirement benefits are to all safety members as well as all general members. Now that he is directly involved as a LACERA board member, he has gained a higher level of respect for the LACERA board functions. The board members must have a full understanding of the many retirement laws and policies in order to maintain LACERA's strong and stable pension fund. In these new capacities he can stay thoroughly abreast of the issues affecting retirement benefits as well as employee fringe benefits.

A major focus for Mr. Pryor is member service. He feels we must constantly be proactive and open to any new enhancements and continue to strive for a world-class status in member service.

A career as a firefighter can be very rewarding, and Mr. Pryor would encourage any courageous individuals to enlist. In his spare time, he plays ice hockey on an all-firemen's team -- traveling to the East Coast and Canada for tournaments. He was married in April 2000 and enjoys spending time with his wife, Michelle.

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## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DESK

Marsha D. Richter, Chief Executive  
Officer

### YOUR ANNUAL BENEFIT STATEMENT - WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

We are now mailing your Annual Benefit Statement to you in the month following your birthday. Each year when you receive your statement, your main area of focus is most likely your Retirement Account Status. The figures shown in this section are a total of your monthly retirement contributions to a contributory plan (Plan A, B, C or D).

Because LACERA is a defined benefit plan, the funds posted in your retirement account are not available for use while you are in active County service. In other words, you cannot use or borrow against these funds to pay for education, to purchase real estate, to buy back previous service credit, or for financial hardships.

Our members frequently ask what happens to their retirement contributions and the retirement contributions made on their behalf by the County during their County employment. Members also want to know if they will ever receive a refund of those contributions.

### HOW ARE YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS USED?

Members who terminate County service before retirement will receive a full refund of the contributions they made, plus the interest which was credited to those contributions. Contributions made by the County are not refundable. However, if you retire from the County you will receive a retirement allowance *for life*. Your allowance is funded by: (1) your contributions, (2) contributions made by the County and (3) investment earnings on those contributions.

If you are in a contributory retirement plan, your retirement allowance is based on two components: the annuity reserve and the pension reserve. Your contributions are used to fund the annuity reserve portion of your retirement allowance. In addition, your contributions are also used to fund 50% of your cost-of-living increases after retirement.

The County contributions are used to fund the pension reserve portion (or balance) of your retirement allowance (plus the other 50% of cost-of-living increases for contributory plan members).

As a defined benefit plan, we guarantee your benefits at retirement. With a defined benefit plan, you know exactly what you are going to receive when you retire. Your benefit is expressed as a percentage of your average pay based on your age, years of service and retirement plan.

Contributions made by members and the County are invested by the Investment Board in a variety of investments. The earnings on these investments are credited semiannually as "interest" to both member and County contributions at a rate set by the Board of Investments. The interest is used to help pay retirement allowances and is included in the taxable annuity reserve and/or pension reserve portion of your allowance.

If you are a Plan E member, you make no retirement contributions. Therefore, your retirement allowance is based entirely on contributions paid by the County.

### SAVINGS PLAN AND HORIZONS PLAN

The County offers the 401K Savings Plan and the Horizons Plan as optional vehicles to supplement your LACERA benefits. These plans are defined contribution plans. Retirement benefits received from a defined contribution plan are based on how well an employee has invested his own funds.

The County contributions to these plans are partially vested for the first four years in the plan and become 100% vested after 5 years. The money you have invested in the plans as well as your vested County contributions can be withdrawn upon the following events:

- Retirement
- Disability
- Death
- Termination of employment with the County

You may also be eligible to access your money via a loan, in-service withdrawal, or hardship withdrawal. There are certain restrictions on the loans and withdrawals under Internal Revenue Service rules. For more information about loans and withdrawals from the 401K Savings Plans and/or the Horizons Plan, please contact Great-West at 1-800-947-0845.

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# The ballots are in! It's official!

## BOARD ELECTION RESULTS

The Board Member Election for active members was held on August 22, 2000.

**Simon S. Russin** has been re-elected once again by the active members to serve on the Board of Retirement for another three-year term. His new term will begin effective January 1, 2001. Congratulations and welcome back Mr. Russin!

**William Pryor** was elected by the safety members to serve as the alternate member on the Board of Retirement. William Pryor replaces Cody Ferguson who officially retired from the board in August 2000. Mr. Pryor will complete the remainder of Mr. Ferguson's term, which will end on December 31, 2001.

**Brian C. Brooks** was elected by the active members to serve a three-year term on the Board of Investments. Mr. Brooks will replace Richard Shumsky who chose not to run for another term. His official term will begin effective January 1, 2001.

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Simon S. Russin



William Pryor

## INDUCTION CEREMONY FOR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Newly elected board members, Brian C. Brooks and Simon S. Russin were officially inducted in a special ceremony held on November 3, 2000 in LACERA's Robert J. Hermann Boardroom.



Dr. Arthur Henry led the invocation for this special event. The board members were sworn in by Wayne Petersen, manager of LACERA's Internal Audit Unit.

The board members took their formal pledge to support and defend the Constitution of the

United States and California and to faithfully discharge the duties of the board. This historic occasion may become a new tradition to commemorate the election of new LACERA board members.



Brian C. Brooks

## HEALTH CARE BENEFITS FOR YOUR RETIREMENT

When you retire, you can look forward to the valuable Health Care Benefits offered through LACERA. The LACERA-sponsored Health Care Benefits Program offers the same medical and dental/vision plans to all County retirees and their eligible dependents regardless of your classification or bargaining unit while in active service. For active employees, the medical plan benefit levels are varied based on what the unions have negotiated for different employee job classifications. The LACERA-sponsored health plans are established on a contract between the County of Los Angeles and LACERA.

The retiree health plans offered by LACERA are similar but not identical to those offered to active employees through the County Department of Human Resources and some union agencies. To help you make the best decision possible regarding your health plan, we are featuring the different options currently available to LACERA retirees. In previous issues, we covered the four different options under the Blue Cross Plan and the SCAN Health Plan. This issue features *Pacificare/Secure Horizons*.

### PACIFICARE/SECURE HORIZONS PLANS FOR LACERA RETIREES

*Pacificare* is one of the Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) plans offered in the LACERA Health Care Benefits Program. *Secure Horizons* is the corresponding LACERA-sponsored Medicare HMO plan. An HMO is a health care plan that requires you to use certain providers specified by the plan.

#### Pacificare HMO Features

- This plan is available to eligible LACERA retirees and dependents who are under age 65.
- You must receive **All** care through Pacificare providers.
- Pacificare contracts with physicians and hospitals throughout Southern California.
- No deductibles
- No claim forms
- Copayments are required for certain services

#### Secure Horizons Medicare HMO Features

- This plan is available to eligible LACERA retirees and their dependents who are age 65 or over and enrolled in Medicare Parts A and B.
- If you have Medicare coverage and wish to enroll in Secure Horizons, all eligible family members who are under age 65 (and therefore not eligible for Medicare) **must** enroll in Pacificare.
- Your premiums for Medicare Part B are reimbursed by the County on a tax-free basis, subject to annual approval.
- Secure Horizons allows you to receive care from its many network providers.
- No deductibles
- No claim forms
- **Senior Fit** is a free health assessment and custom-designed fitness program.
- Basic dental benefits for Secure Horizons members only (no dental coverage for dependents in Pacificare)

#### Here's How It Works

*Example:* You are a LACERA retiree, age 65, who has Medicare Parts A and B and would like to enroll in Secure Horizons. Your spouse, age 60, is not yet eligible for Medicare. If you enroll in Secure Horizons, your spouse must enroll in Pacificare -- the corresponding non-Medicare plan for eligible members and dependents. On the other hand, if your spouse is eligible for Medicare and you are not, you must enroll in Pacificare and your spouse must enroll in Secure Horizons -- the corresponding Medicare plan.

A Medicare HMO plan is an HMO that has a contract with the federal government to provide health care services to those with Medicare Parts A and B coverage. Medicare (the federal government) in turn, pays the HMO a monthly fee for each member.

To participate in a Medicare HMO plan, you must agree to receive **ALL** medical services from plan providers (except emergency care while traveling outside the HMO service areas). When you enroll in a Medicare HMO, you assign all Medicare benefits to the Medicare HMO.

Need more information? Call **LACERA** for enrollment information and benefits changes. Call the [insurance carrier](#) for plan booklets, claim forms, eligibility and billing questions.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** Secure Horizons will limit new enrollments for the year 2001. Many Northern California counties will stop new enrollment for Secure Horizons effective December 2000. These counties include San Francisco, Alameda, Sacramento, Marin, Napa, San Mateo, Kern, Sonoma and others. Two Southern California counties are affected by this - Riverside and San Bernardino. Los Angeles, San Diego and Orange counties are not affected.

For more information please contact Pacificare (the parent company of Secure Horizons) at 1-800-228-2144.

[Click here for more details.](#)

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# Think You're internet Savvy?

By Jeannine "web action" Sabatini

Check it out! Here's a quick fun-filled quiz for you to test your cyberspace knowledge.

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### 1) What is zip?

- A. A term for modem speed
- B. Short for zipper
- C. A compressed file

### 2) What does surfing refer to?

- A. The currents that your online carrier delivers via transmission.
- B. Traveling through cyberspace e.g., browsing
- C. Cool guys in wet suits riding waves

### 3) What is an ISP?

- A. Internal Spatial Program, an upgrade to increase your hard drive space
- B. Something nice people don't talk about
- C. Internet Service Provider, a company that provides online access to the internet

### 4) What is spam?

- A. Unsolicited annoying emails
- B. A scary meat by-product
- C. The link between browsers

### 5) What is a link?

- A. A special moment or connection between people
- B. Text that leads, "links" to other information someplace else in cyberspace. Links are recognized as colored underlined text and the mouse pointer changes shape when you pass over them
- C. The cord leading from your monitor to your computer

### 6) What is a domain name?

- A. Your maiden name
- B. A URL or Internet address
- C. A name you call your domain

### 7) What is a browser?

- A. A screen placed over the computer monitor to block reflections
- B. Software for viewing web pages e.g., Netscape Explorer, Microsoft Internet Explorer
- C. A person who spends way too much time looking around in electronic stores without making a purchase

### 8) What is an attachment?

- A. Another name for your online pass code
- B. A longing or desire for something or someone
- C. A file (text, graphic, sound) sent along with an email message

### 9) What is a kilobyte?

- A. A single celled organism
- B. A thousand bytes of data
- C. Another name for the first key, top row, left side of your keyboard

### 10) What is a user?

- A. Another term for online carrier
- B. A person who takes and does not give back
- C. A person who uses the Internet

### 11) What is a bandwidth?

- A. The size of an orchestra, or band on stage
- B. The spread between your thumb and little finger on the keyboard
- C. The carrying capacity of any communications technology, the amount of information that can be sent through the Internet, measured in bits-per-second

### 12) What is a bookmark?

- A. An artsy piece of paper you stick between pages to save your place
- B. A web page saved on your browser for a quick and easy return to it, also referred to as a "favorite"
- C. All of the above

### 13) What is a homepage?

- A. The first page of a web site
- B. Any web page seen on a computer at home
- C. What homeboys read

### 14) What is HTML?

- A. Hyper Thermo Molecular Linking which occurs when a computer freezes up
- B. HyperText Markup Language used to create web pages with embedded tags and codes in text documents
- C. Four letters of the English alphabet

### 15) What is Intranet?

- A. Internet spelled with an "a"
- B. The static electric field produced by the computer monitor
- C. An internal network used within companies to communicate, works similar to the Internet but without the outside web connection

### 16) What is a newsgroup?

- A. A group on Usenet devoted to the discussion of a specific topic
- B. Television network news online
- C. The portion of a web site that contains the latest breaking news

And the correct answers are...

1-C, 2-B, 3-C, 4-A, 5-B, 6-B, 7-B, 8-C, 9-B, 10-C, 11-C, 12-C, 13-A, 14-B, 15-C, 16-A

So you **user** you, **browse** and **surf** your **ISP's bandwidth** and go to a **newsgroup** and **checkout** our **domain name** and view our **homepage** and enjoy its **HTML** coding and its **links** and save it as a **bookmark** and go ahead and **attach** something **500 kilobytes** large and it may **zip** the file on the email but don't ever send **spam**, because it's just not nice.

**LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

The following bills amending the County Employees Retirement Law were enacted by the State Legislature during the recently concluded legislative session.

### Bills amending the LACERA plans without further action by the LACERA Board of Retirement or the Board of Supervisors

#### AB 1817 (Chapter 138)

**Blood-borne infectious disease presumption:** Adds a rebuttable presumption for blood-borne infectious diseases, applicable to disability retirement applications of safety members, firefighters, county probation officers, and members in active law enforcement with five (5) or more years of service. The disability would be presumed to be service-connected if the member demonstrates he or she was exposed to blood or blood products as a result of performance of job duties. This bill allows the application to be filed for a period of three (3) months for each full year of service (not to exceed five (5) years) after the last date actually worked in the specified capacity.

#### AB 2176 (Chapter 317)

**Cancer presumption:** Effective January 1, 2000, the disability retirement provisions were amended to incorporate a cancer presumption for safety members exposed to known carcinogens as a result of performance of job duties. Sections 2 and 3 of AB 2176 incorporate technical changes to the cancer presumption, as recommended by LACERA, and clarifies that an application is timely if filed within three (3) calendar months for each full year of safety member service (not to exceed five (5) years) from the last date actually worked as a safety member.

#### AB 2331 (Chapter 966)

**Reciprocity:** Section 1 of AB 2331 incorporates several technical changes to provisions dealing with reciprocity. These changes conform the law to current LACERA practice and therefore have no impact in Los Angeles County.

**FLSA premium pay:** Section 2 of AB 2331 provides that premium pay required by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) shall be pensionable. This also is in accord with LACERA's current practice and therefore will require no changes in Los Angeles County.

#### AB 2841 (Chapter 203)

**Compensation earnable:** This bill amends Govt. Code Section 31582 to require contributions on "compensation earnable, as defined in Section 31461," instead of on "the total amount of compensation." This also is in accord with current LACERA practice and therefore will require no change in Los Angeles County.

#### SB 2008 (Chapter 497)

**Payment of retirement allowance for month of member's death:** Under current law, the retirement allowance for the month during which the member died is payable to the member's heirs and may be subject to probate. Section 1 of SB 2008 simplifies administration by allowing LACERA to pay the final allowance to the person designated as the beneficiary under the member's account. **Survivor allowance for service-connected death prior to retirement:** Section 2 of SB 2008 conforms the law to current practice in determining the amount of the survivor's allowance when a member dies prior to retirement and the death is service-connected. The survivor benefit is equal to the amount the member would have received if the member had retired on a service-connected disability retirement.

### Bills enacting provisions that do not take effect in Los Angeles County unless adopted by majority vote of the LACERA Board of Retirement

#### AB 2176 (Chapter 317)

**STAR COLA Program:** The LACERA STAR COLA program provides a supplemental cost-of-living increase to maintain a retiree's purchasing power at 75%. The STAR COLA benefit is not vested, can only be provided if excess earnings are available, and the supplemental increase does not become part of the allowance to be increased in future years. Section 4 of AB 2176 allows the Board of Retirement to increase STAR COLA benefits to maintain a retiree's purchasing power at 80%.

**Vested STAR COLA adjustments:** Section 5 of SB 2176 allows the Board of Retirement to vest STAR COLA adjustments if the adjustments can be prefunded using excess earnings. The supplemental adjustments become part of the allowances to be increased in future years.

### Bills enacting provisions that do not take effect in Los Angeles County unless adopted by majority vote of the Board of Supervisors

#### AB 448 (Chapter 882)

**2% at age 55 formula for general members:** Section 3 of AB 448 allows the Board of Supervisors to implement 2% at age 55 benefit formula

#### AB 1937 (Chapter 237)

**3% at age 50 and 3% at age 55 formulas for safety members, and increased retirement and survivor allowances for any member:** Allows the Board of Supervisors to enhance service retirement allowances for safety members based on a 3% at age 50 formula or a 3% at age 55 formula, and to increase allowances for retired members and survivors by up to 6%, as specified.

#### AB 2176 (Chapter 317)

**Discontinuance of member contributions:** In Los Angeles County, member contributions are discontinued after 30 years of continuous service credit if the member was a member on March 7, 1973. This bill allows the Board of Supervisors to authorize the discontinuance of contributions after 30 years of service, which need not be continuous and may include reciprocal service, regardless of the date of membership.

#### SB 1696 (Chapter 495)

**Retroactive application of enhanced benefit formula:** Current law provides that a benefit formula shall apply only to service rendered while the formula was in effect. SB 1696 allows the Board of Supervisors to apply an enhanced benefit formula retroactively to service already rendered, and, if approved in a memorandum of understanding, to require the member to pay part or all of the member contributions that would have been required during the period of retroactivity.

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Public Service Announcement**Heart Disease Prevention  
Study Volunteers Needed**

The USC Atherosclerosis Research Unit is performing a vital research study on atherosclerosis (or hardening of the arteries). This condition results in coronary heart disease and stroke – the leading cause of death and disability in men and women over 40 years of age. Using B-vitamin supplementation provides a promising approach for preventing heart disease. However, it is yet unproven. This study will help determine whether B-vitamin supplementation prevents or slows the progression of hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis) and hence, coronary heart disease in individuals who have not yet developed this problem. The study is funded by the National Institute on Aging.

If you are at least 40 years old, do not have heart disease, are interested in good health, and are willing to take B-vitamins for 2.5 years, you may qualify for this major health prevention study. We are especially interested in individuals older than 50 years of age. Participation is free and easy and will take place in a modern clinical facility on the USC health campus.

If you qualify, you will receive free cholesterol and blood pressure measurements, EKGs, ultrasound scans of the neck arteries, and other health monitoring. Ultrasound is used to assess the progress of atherosclerosis in the arteries, it is a non-invasive painless procedure involving no risk.

For more information, call USC Atherosclerosis Research Unit toll free at (866) 240-1489, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 pm. or visit their web site at [www.usc.edu/medicine/aru](http://www.usc.edu/medicine/aru). (Note, you will be leaving LACERA's site)

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**BENEFIT NOTES** by Alice Natale**PLANNING TO RETIRE SOON?**

There's a lot to think about when you're preparing for retirement. You may have many personal tasks or goals you want to complete before you retire. Or you may decide to retire without taking a lot of time to plan. In any case, please keep in mind that there are certain steps required before we can process your retirement.

First, you must request a retirement estimate. We suggest that you do this 5 to 6 months prior to your projected retirement date. Once you receive your formal estimate, it becomes your application to retire. You must return the signed application prior to your retirement date. We recommend returning it at least 60 days prior to your intended retirement date. If you are married, you must provide your certified marriage license and your spouse's certified birth certificate along with the signed retirement application. We will accept these documents at our public counter and return them to you immediately once we verify that we viewed the original document. Or you can send the documents to us, but be sure to put the member's social security number as well as your spouse's social security number on the forms.

Another important step is to notify your department of your intent to retire. This will allow time for your department to initiate your outgoing paperwork. Timely processing of this paperwork will enable LACERA to pay your first retirement check in a timely manner. This advance notice will also give your department ample time to plan that fabulous retirement party for you. ■

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LACERA  
POSTSCRIPT

# P.S.

PLANNING A SECURE FUTURE

LOS ANGELES COUNTY EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT ASSOCIATION

VOL. 10 NO. 3

NEWS FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS

DECEMBER 2009

## SAVINGS PLAN and HORIZONS PLAN

If you contribute to the County's 401K Savings Plan or the Horizons Plan, please remember to notify the plan administrator – **Great-West** – at least 30 to 60 days before you retire.

There are several benefit payment options for you to choose from. If your account balance is less than \$3,500, you must take a lump-sum distribution. If your account balance is \$3,500 or more, you may choose from four options:

- 1) Lump-sum distribution of your entire account or a portion of your account
- 2) Periodic payments made directly from your investment account
- 3) Annuity payments made by an insurance company
- 4) Defer the balance to a later date

You may also elect a combination of these options. Please be sure to study all your options and choose the one that is best for you.

Preparing for retirement takes some thought and planning on your part. However, if you contact us a few months before your anticipated retirement date, we can help you complete the required steps and make this a pleasant experience for you.

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PLANNING A SECURE FUTURE

LOS ANGELES COUNTY EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT ASSOCIATION

VOL. 10 NO. 3

NEWS FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS

DECEMBER 2000

**ROBERT A. STOTELMEYER,**

long-time Board of Retirement member, passed away on December 14, 2000, after a lengthy illness. As a member of the Board since January 1, 1978, Mr. Stotelmeyer made many valuable contributions to LACERA. He was elected by the retirees and was a passionate advocate and protector of retiree rights.

Mr. Stotelmeyer was recently honored for his help in establishing the 1982

Retiree Health Benefits Contract, the STAR COLA Program, and the 1994 Retirement System Funding Agreement. He was a forceful proponent for increasing the STAR COLA benefits to the 80% funding level, which was accomplished on December 6, 2000, when the Board of Retirement adopted a resolution honoring Mr. Stotelmeyer for this benefit enhancement. His dedication to the Retirement Board was unflinching, and he will be greatly missed by his fellow Board members and staff.

Mr. Stotelmeyer's name will be permanently inscribed on the LACERA Honor Roll that resides in the boardroom.

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