

P.S.

# POST SCRIPT

NEWS FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS

DECEMBER 2021 • VOL. 32, NO. 4

## State of the Office

### Setting Our Path for 2022 and Beyond



**Santos H. Kreimann**  
Chief Executive Officer

Hello, members. Since this issue of *PostScript* usually arrives late in December or early January, the executive team is providing a LACERA “State of the Office” address to coincide with the start of the year and the January kickoff of our first comprehensive strategic planning process—in conjunction with the boards—since 2017. With this baseline of LACERA’s status, we can keep you updated throughout 2022 and beyond.

LACERA’s other executive team members are Deputy CEO Luis Lugo and Assistant Executive Officers JJ Popowich and Laura Guglielmo. Most of you are probably familiar with Mr. Popowich, who has long served in leadership roles at LACERA. As

announced in the last issue, Mr. Lugo started in July, and Ms. Guglielmo started in September (see Accomplishments on page 5 for more details). This is an accomplished group of public service professionals that I am excited to work with, and each has provided an individual update starting on page 3.

#### Why We Filed a Lawsuit Against the County

First, I want to address the recent lawsuit filed by LACERA against the County and Board of Supervisors. On October 18, we filed a petition for a writ of mandate in Superior Court seeking affirmation of LACERA’s independence. The roots of this lawsuit stem from 2017, when the County began substituting its judgment on critical personnel decisions, rejecting or modifying several job classifications and compensation levels approved by LACERA trustees. Until then,

for decades the County had acknowledged LACERA’s authority to appoint employees and set salaries. We are asking the court to confirm LACERA’s autonomous management authority under the law and, specifically, we want the court to allow us to implement the key personnel decisions laid out in the lawsuit.

Resolving this issue ties directly into our strategic planning process and achieving our organizational

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## Board of Retirement:

### ALAN J. BERNSTEIN

Chair  
Appointed by Board of Supervisors

### VIVIAN H. GRAY

Vice Chair  
Elected by General Members

### GINA ZAPANTA

Secretary  
Appointed by Board of Supervisors

### ELIZABETH B. GINSBERG

Chief Deputy County Treasurer  
and Tax Collector  
Alternate Ex-Officio Member

### JAMES P. HARRIS

Alternate Member  
Elected by Retired Members

### SHAWN R. KEHOE

Elected by Safety Members

### KEITH KNOX

County Treasurer and Tax Collector  
Ex-Officio Member

### WAYNE MOORE

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

### RONALD A. OKUM

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

### WILLIAM R. PRYOR

Alternate Member  
Elected by Safety Members

### LES ROBBINS

Elected by Retired Members

### HERMAN B. SANTOS

Elected by General Members

## Board of Investments:

### KEITH KNOX

Chair  
County Treasurer and Tax Collector  
Ex-Officio Member

### JOSEPH KELLY

Vice Chair  
Elected by Retired Members

### ALAN J. BERNSTEIN

Secretary  
Appointed by Board of Supervisors

### ELIZABETH B. GINSBERG

Chief Deputy County Treasurer  
and Tax Collector  
Alternate Ex-Officio Member

### DAVID GREEN

Elected by General Members

### ELIZABETH GREENWOOD

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

### PATRICK L. JONES

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

### SHAWN R. KEHOE

Elected by Safety Members

### GINA V. SANCHEZ

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

### HERMAN B. SANTOS

Elected by General Members

Chief Executive Officer

### SANTOS H. KREIMANN

Deputy Chief Executive Officer

### LUIS A. LUGO

Assistant Executive Officers

### LAURA GUGLIELMO

### JJ POPOWICH

## State of the Office cont'd

mission. Having timely control over creating, modifying, and filling staff positions (which are paid for out of our own budget) in coordination with setting our strategic goals is critical. It directly affects our annual budget planning and implementation as well as our operational capabilities and project management decisions. Any delays or rejections of critical personnel positions keep LACERA in a holding pattern, hampering our ability to manage and develop our divisions as we feel is necessary to produce, protect, and provide our members' promised benefits, and potentially constraining our strategic goals for them.

Please be assured that LACERA has a good working relationship with the County and intends to maintain it, despite the current disagreement. This does not affect your benefits in any way. The lawsuit also does not seek to change the status of LACERA staff as County employees. LACERA only asks the court to confirm that the County is legally obligated to respect our boards' exclusive fiduciary authority to decide the positions and salaries needed to run the retirement system in the best interest of members. We hope to achieve swift, clear resolution from the court and will keep you posted on any major developments.

## On to Strategic Planning: What Is It, and Why Is It Important?

Strategic planning is the collaborative process of the boards, executive team, managers, and key staff members to establish our organizational goals, based on our mission, vision, and values. The

strategic plan is the layout of those goals and is a critical tool for creating our budget and allocating resources.

This year, we are taking a fresh approach and will be enlisting a professional consultant to help us develop a new process and write the plan. Besides reviewing past practices and established policies and procedures, the consultant will conduct extensive information gathering, seeking input from across LACERA before making recommendations. This will ensure that we receive a wide range of perspectives to create a robust process with organization-wide buy-in.

The planning process will include a series of meetings with all participants to determine priorities, set specific goals, decide which projects we need to undertake to achieve those goals, and set deadlines for completion. Then everything will be put into the final plan that will serve as LACERA's roadmap in the years to come.

Our first meetings will focus within, while we simultaneously establish the new process. We will take a close look at how well we are living up to our mission and revisit our vision and values statements. Later meetings will dive into our business operations, looking at everything from member services to technology to investment management.

Now I'd like you to hear directly from our other executive officers about what they are working on and what they look forward to accomplishing at LACERA.



Luis A. Lugo

Deputy Chief  
Executive Officer

## Moving Forward With Clear Purpose

Hi, LACERA members! I'm glad to have this opportunity to speak to you for the first time in *PostScript* to update you on the executive team's activities and—as a relative newcomer to the team—share more about my core values in serving LACERA and its members.

As Deputy CEO, I work closely with CEO Kreimann and AEOs Popowich and Guglielmo to expedite forward movement on our strategic goals. I strive to lead with integrity, purpose, and determination. Having a strong moral compass provides clarity in decision-making, ensuring we are doing the best thing for the organization and its members. The destination should always be at the forefront, so I work hard to clearly define, communicate, and align a pathway forward, using roadblocks or constraints as opportunities for learning and adjusting course as needed.

The development and empowerment of others is critical to any organization's success. I value and promote an environment that fosters collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving at all levels of the organization. That's why I'll be taking an active role in analyzing the staff suggestions for improvement that we received in last year's employee engagement survey and focus groups. The staff feedback is being built into action plans

that will dovetail nicely with the upcoming strategic planning process, helping us make LACERA a better place to work and a stronger organization overall.

I'm excited to be a part of LACERA's continued evolution in meeting the changing needs of our members for decades to come. Some of our ongoing modernization initiatives are described in the AEO sections below, but we will be developing many more in the future. Whether you're a new employee, going through a life event such as disability, or preparing to retire, we'll be here for you in the manner of your choosing.



JJ Popowich

Assistant Executive  
Officer

## Improving Your Member Experience

Happy new year, members! As we wind up the holidays, start the new year, and set the course for LACERA, I naturally find myself reflecting on your contributions to the community and LACERA's role in your lives. Nothing is more noble than taking care of another person, and I often describe what we do as taking care of our members from the day they start working until they leave this world and then beyond, because we take care of their survivors and beneficiaries even after they are gone.

As the AEO overseeing the Member Operations Group, I help the divisions that directly serve you to provide the best

member experience possible. After nearly 30 years in customer service for companies in many industries, I can tell you that our staff's dedication to our mission is truly unique and inspires me every day. That's why I do everything I can to provide them the resources they need to efficiently perform their work, while we all constantly look for new ways to improve service to you.

One of the major ways we are doing that is by advancing several priority projects identified by the trustees and boosting our technical capabilities. We know that being able to conduct your LACERA business online is an important option for many of you. In 2021, we completed a project to allow members to submit required certificates electronically. Previously, members were required to mail original birth, marriage/domestic partnership, death, and other certificates to LACERA, which was time-consuming as well as disconcerting for many, considering the immense personal significance of such documents.

We have several more projects in the pipeline aimed at streamlining important processes for members. First, we are working on the death benefit claims process, to get benefits to survivors faster. We recognize that the loss of a loved one is a sad and stressful time, so making the process easier and more efficient while ensuring we remain compliant with the law is our goal.

We are also redesigning the retirement application. LACERA has used **cont'd on pg. 4**

## State of the Office cont'd

the same basic form for decades, and we have much better options now to provide personalized retirement packets to members. The new application provides a customized, comprehensive overview of the retiring member's benefits, including detailed allowance estimates under the different options. The new application will be entering the beta testing phase soon and is the first step in fulfilling a strategic initiative to allow members to retire online.

Finally, I am pleased to share we are in the beginning phase of developing a new case management system. LACERA employees use specialty software programs in their respective divisions, but there is no larger system that all the programs plug into—meaning the various programs aren't designed to work together or share information. The new system will integrate the applications LACERA uses for everything from first retirement payments to insurance enrollment and will automate certain processes. This will greatly improve our ability to manage member requests throughout their careers and provide data to help us improve operations. This is a big initiative involving several divisions and will be completed in multiple phases over the next few years.



**Laura Guglielmo**  
Assistant Executive  
Officer

## Cultivating Strength From Within

Hello, members! I hope your new year is off to a good start. I appreciate this chance to

introduce myself as well as share updates from the administrative side of the house.

As the AEO overseeing the Administrative Services, Human Resources, Financial and Accounting, and Systems divisions, I'm eager to lend my skills and experience toward sustainably and prudently fulfilling our commitment to those of you who have given so much to others. I've spent my entire career in the public sector, with managerial positions in fire and police pensions, community development, and city administration, so I have seen firsthand how public service professionals like you dedicate your careers and lives to helping your community in every way imaginable. You and your families should have total confidence that your promised benefits will be there for you when the time comes. I take my fiduciary duty seriously and want you to know you can count on the LACERA team now and into the future!

A strong leader must have a clear vision for the future of the organization, which includes a workplace culture that reflects its values, and they must be able to consistently communicate that vision and those values through their words and actions. At LACERA, I plan to promote a culture of professionalism, ingenuity, and respect for others through my own personal behavior and by cultivating such values among our team.

In addition to participating in strategic planning and major initiatives like the new case management system, one of my top priorities is to evaluate, streamline, and improve our employee recruitment and

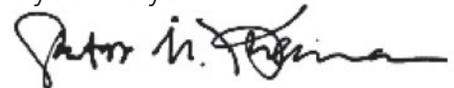
retention methods. Ensuring we have a skilled, motivated workforce is vital to addressing our operational needs today and into the future. We are currently developing a systematic hiring and recruitment plan to bring our vacancy rate down to more sustainable levels, but this will be greatly influenced by the outcome of our lawsuit against the County. We are also revamping our telework policy to provide our employees greater flexibility and quality of life without sacrificing member service or security. This is only possible due to the tremendous innovations implemented by our Systems Division in the past 18 months, so a special shout-out to our technical team for all your hard work!

## Closing Thoughts From the CEO

I hope you enjoyed hearing from the rest of the leadership team about our major initiatives. These are significant projects that will take many months to accomplish, but we will keep you informed about our progress via *PostScript*, [lacera.com](http://lacera.com), and email announcements.

Thanks to the leadership and support of the LACERA trustees, there is a high degree of energy and engagement at all levels of LACERA leading into our strategic planning meetings, and we are motivated to examine, improve, and innovate the way we do things. We want to continually raise the bar of your expectations of us—and then exceed them.

Thanks for all you do. Take care, and a happy and healthy new year to you and your families.





# LACERA ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## LACERA Welcomes New AEO Laura Guglielmo



Laura Guglielmo

In September, Laura Guglielmo joined LACERA, filling the vacant assistant executive officer (AEO) position to complete the executive team. Ms. Guglielmo will support LACERA’s mission by leading the Administrative Services, Human Resources, Financial and

Accounting, and Systems divisions, in addition to other responsibilities. Her immediate high-priority projects include the development of LACERA’s new case management and budget systems, and she will be a key participant in the 2022 strategic planning process.

Ms. Guglielmo has extensive public sector administrative leadership experience in various municipal organizations. Prior to joining LACERA, Ms. Guglielmo served as City Manager for the City of Palos Verdes Estates, Assistant General Manager for the Los Angeles Fire and Police Pension System, and Executive Officer for the City of Los Angeles’s Housing and Community Investment Department.

## LACERA Honored for Excellence in Financial Reporting

For the 31st consecutive year, LACERA has been awarded the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Certification of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for LACERA’s Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2020. The GFOA award represents the highest possible recognition of governmental accounting and financial reporting.



In addition, our annual Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR)—a condensed version of the ACFR sent to all members with their December newsletter—earned the GFOA award for Outstanding Achievement for the 23rd consecutive year.



Congratulations to the LACERA departments and employees who contributed to the annual reports for earning these prestigious national awards.

## LACERA Board



Vivian H. Gray

In August, LACERA general members voted for the third trustee seats on both the Board of Retirement (BOR) and the Board of Investments (BOI). Members were able to vote via email, telephone, or mail, with nearly 5,800 votes cast.

Incumbent Trustee **Vivian Gray** was reelected to the BOR, where she has served since 2013, and incumbent Trustee **Herman Santos** was reelected to the BOI, where he has served since 2004. Their new three-year terms begin in January 2022 and run through December 2024.



Herman B. Santos

Congratulations and welcome back, Trustees Gray and Santos!

### Update Your Information with LACERA

To make voting in LACERA Board elections easier, make sure your email address is on file with LACERA. This election, 292 general members

still received paper ballots in the mail because we did not have their email addresses. By keeping your contact info up to date, you will receive important election updates from LACERA and be able to take advantage of convenient electronic options for voting.

# The Flu Blows—Get Your Shot Today!

COVID-19 isn't the only highly transmittable disease that can be prevented or mitigated by the science of vaccines. Shots for the seasonal flu have long been available, and it's never too late to get yours.

Most healthcare providers have easy methods to get a flu shot, making it as convenient as driving thru a clinic, visiting a pharmacist, or just seeing your physician.

- For Kaiser Permanente, visit [www.kp.org/flu](http://www.kp.org/flu) or call 800-777-7904.

- For Anthem Blue Cross, visit [www.my-flu-shot.com](http://www.my-flu-shot.com) or call 800-331-1476.
- For Cigna, visit [www.mycigna.com](http://www.mycigna.com) or call 800-244-6224.
- For SCAN Health Plan, visit [www.scanhealthplan.com](http://www.scanhealthplan.com) or call 800-559-3500.
- For UnitedHealthcare, [www.myuhc.com](http://www.myuhc.com) or call 800-624-8822.
- For UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage, visit [www.uhcretiree.com](http://www.uhcretiree.com) or call 800-457-8506.

You can also visit Los Angeles County's Department of Public Health (DPH) website at [www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/FluSeason/](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/FluSeason/) to find out how you, or a friend or family member who may be uninsured, can get a flu shot today.

## Attend Our Pre-Retirement Workshops From Home

Pre-Retirement workshops that were previously held in person at our Pasadena offices or offsite throughout L.A. County have been moved online using our virtual platform.

We are currently offering:

- Pre-Retirement seminars for members who are within five years of retirement
- Mid-career "Make the Most of Your Retirement Plans" seminars
- Retiree Healthcare seminars

Empower Retirement continues to join us in our webinars to help you make the most of your 401(k) and 457(b) plans. We are also joined by the LACERA-sponsored Long-Term Care Program, which provides basic information and invites members to a follow-up meeting to learn more.

Go to [lacera.com](http://lacera.com) and click on the Pre-Retirement Workshops tile on the homepage to access the current schedule and sign up. Other available webinars include: LACERA's Special Durable Power of Attorney, domestic partnerships, new employee orientations, and post-retirement planning.

We also partner with Empower Retirement on their virtual platform for mini-webinars such as comprehensive account reviews and how to navigate and use your 401(k) and 457(b) accounts' analytical tools. Sign up at [www.CountyLA.com](http://www.CountyLA.com) to register for Empower-hosted webinars.



WE WISH YOU PEACE, HEALTH,  
AND HAPPINESS  
THIS HOLIDAY SEASON  
AND THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

—LACERA Boards, Management,  
and Staff Members

# Sign Up for a Comprehensive Account Review



Looking for a secure, virtual, one-on-one experience to help you along your path to retirement? Empower Retirement provides Comprehensive Account Reviews to all County of Los Angeles employees. During your one-on-one Comprehensive Account Review, we will answer the following questions:

- Will my LACERA, 457(b) Horizons and/or 401(k) Savings Plans be enough to meet my retirement goals?
- How do all of my accounts and outside assets work together towards a secure retirement?
- Do I have to replace 100% of my income in retirement to meet my goals?

We will review the following, if applicable:

- Review all aspects of the 457(b) Horizons Plan and the 401(k) Savings Plan;
- Review LACERA percentage of replacement income;
- Review Social Security benefit and/or outside retirement accounts;
- Use the Retirement Projection Calculator to determine if you are financially on track for retirement at your desired age; and

- Include your comprehensive account review results in the new website experience.

## Who should attend?

Everyone. Whether you're one year or 30 years from retirement, this review is right for you.

## What should I bring?

To maximize your experience and help us complete your retirement picture, we encourage you to bring:

- ✓ A copy of your two most recent paystubs.
- ✓ And, if you would like to include it in the review, any other sources of retirement income, such as your Social Security statement and/or outside retirement account statements.

**To schedule your Comprehensive Account Review today, call (800) 947-0845!**

Investment options and their underlying funds have been selected by the Plan Administrative Committee. Securities offered by GWFS Equities, Inc., Member FINRA/SIPC. GWFS is an affiliate of Empower Retirement, LLC. This material is for informational purposes only and is not intended to provide investment, legal or tax recommendations or advice. ©2020 Empower Retirement, LLC. All rights reserved. RO1325564-0920

## 3 THINGS: The Rose Bowl

Every January brings annual traditions to Southern California—the Tournament of Roses Parade, Golden Globes, and so on—but for football fans, one tradition remains the granddaddy of them all: the annual Rose Bowl Game. Whether you're tailgating at the stadium or watching from your couch, here are three facts about the big game:



1 The first Rose Bowl was played in 1902, with the University of Michigan besting Stanford at Tournament Park. The Valley Hunt Club hosted the game to gain national attention for the Tournament of Roses Parade.



2 The Rose Bowl Stadium was built in 1922 specifically to accommodate the size of the crowds coming to the annual event. Architect Myron Hunt based his design of the stadium on the Yale Bowl in Connecticut.



3 1947 was the first year when the traditional matchup of the winner of the Pacific Coast Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (now the Pac-12 Conference) played the winner of the Big Ten Conference.

Sources: [www.tournamentofroses.com](http://www.tournamentofroses.com); [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com); [www.discoverlosangeles.com](http://www.discoverlosangeles.com); and [www.heavy.com](http://www.heavy.com)

# PAFR Enclosed: Our Financial Condition, at a Glance

This year's Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR) is enclosed for your review.

The PAFR includes LACERA's financial condition and accomplishments for the fiscal year 2020-2021. We encourage you to spend some time reading up on the financial status of our pension plan and retiree healthcare program to see how the trust funds are performing. Our full Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) is available on [lacera.com](http://lacera.com).



# UPDATE

## Public Pension Funds Continue Fight to Repeal Windfall Elimination Provision

LACERA and many other public pension funds are still working with legislators to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO). The Board of Retirement adopted support positions on House bill H.R. 82 (the Social Security Fairness Act of 2021) and the Senate's S. 1302 equivalent. In addition, the Board of Retirement has adopted support positions on H.R. 2337 (the Public Servants Protection and Fairness Act of 2021), which is a WEP modification proposal.

## CELEBRATING BLACK | HISTORY MONTH

LACERA appreciates the contributions of every member and knows that all of you are uniquely important to our community. In that spirit, we recognize and celebrate February as Black History Month, a time to remember and honor the rich and diverse history and achievements of Black and African Americans.

Black History Month was first proposed in 1926 by Dr. Carter G. Woodson and his organization the Association for the Study of

African American Life (ASALH) to recognize the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln (February 12) and Frederick Douglass (February 14). ASALH continues to support the event and designate the annual theme, which for 2022 is Black Health and Wellness (see [www.asalh.org/black-history-themes/](http://www.asalh.org/black-history-themes/)).

For a list of local events, visit [www.discoverlosangeles.com/things-to-do/black-history-month-events-in-los-angeles](http://www.discoverlosangeles.com/things-to-do/black-history-month-events-in-los-angeles).



### Upcoming Holidays LACERA will be closed on:

- **Friday, December 24**  
For Christmas
- **Friday, December 31**  
For New Year's Day
- **Monday, January 17**  
For Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- **Monday, February 21**  
For Presidents Day

#### Editor's Note:

*PostScript* is published by the staff of LACERA. Consult with professional advisors regarding legal, tax, and/or medical matters; LACERA does not offer legal, tax, or medical advice.

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