

P.S.

# POST SCRIPT

NEWS FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS

MARCH 2023 • VOL. 34, NO. 1



New Feature

## Recognizing Our Members' Service and Accomplishments

LACERA has nearly 100,000 active members working in dozens of L.A. County departments, many of whom dedicate their working lives to serving the community. With so many unique stories to tell, starting with this issue of *PostScript*, we will be devoting space to highlight some of our long-serving members as they prepare to enjoy their well-earned retirement.

### Retiring Member Ricardo Toscana

LACERA Member **Ricardo Toscana** is a registered nurse getting set to retire after more than 38 years with L.A. County. Toscana has worked his entire County career at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center in Downey, one of the largest rehabilitation hospitals in the U.S., helping it to



Ricardo Toscana

achieve its mission to restore health, rebuild life, and revitalize hope for persons with a life-changing illness, injury, or disability.

Toscana works in the surgery department of the facility, which cares for approximately 2,500 inpatients annually. He credits his longstanding relationships with center physicians as a fundamental part of providing the best service and quality for patients, from start to finish for every procedure.

While he was initially nervous about filling out his retirement paperwork, Toscana says the process itself was easy with the help of his retirement benefits specialist. He says he is more relaxed now and ready for the retirement he has planned for, which includes more family and home time plus traveling via an important new investment—a 4 x 4 truck.

"We have a small house that we bought in Arizona, so we travel there a lot," he says, adding that the house is a convenient midpoint to destinations like the Grand Canyon, Las Vegas, Colorado, and New Mexico. In addition to his more adventurous pursuits, Toscana intends to balance things out with some house reorganization and painting projects: "So a little traveling and stay home and enjoy."

cont'd on pg. 4

### IN THIS ISSUE

- 5 LACERA Accomplishments
- 5 Join Us: Webinars for All Career Levels
- 6 Multi-Factor Authentication: Keeping You Secure
- 7 Three Things: Women's Rights
- 7 Attend Board Meetings Virtually
- 8 Upcoming Holidays

**Board of Retirement:**

**SHAWN R. KEHOE**

Chair  
Alternate Trustee  
Elected by Safety Members

**ALAN J. BERNSTEIN**

Vice Chair  
Appointed by Board of Supervisors

**VIVIAN H. GRAY**

Secretary  
Elected by General Members

**ELIZABETH B. GINSBERG**

Chief Deputy County Treasurer  
and Tax Collector  
Acting Ex-Officio Trustee\*

**JASON E. GREEN**

Elected by Safety Members

**ELIZABETH GREENWOOD**

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

**JAMES P. HARRIS**

Alternate Trustee  
Elected by Retired Members

**KEITH KNOX**

County Treasurer and Tax Collector  
Ex-Officio Trustee

**RONALD OKUM**

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

**LES ROBBINS**

Elected by Retired Members

**ANTONIO SANCHEZ**

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

**HERMAN B. SANTOS**

Elected by General Members

**Board of Investments:**

**GINA V. SANCHEZ**

Chair  
Appointed by Board of Supervisors

**HERMAN B. SANTOS**

Vice Chair  
Elected by General Members

**JOSEPH KELLY**

Secretary  
Elected by Retired Members

**ELIZABETH B. GINSBERG**

Chief Deputy County Treasurer  
and Tax Collector  
Acting Ex-Officio Trustee\*

**DAVID GREEN**

Elected by General Members

**JASON E. GREEN**

Elected by Safety Members

**ELIZABETH GREENWOOD**

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

**ONYX JONES**

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

**PATRICK L. JONES**

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

**KEITH KNOX**

County Treasurer and Tax Collector  
Ex-Officio Trustee

\* When ex-officio trustee is absent



# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DESK

SANTOS H. KREIMANN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

- LUIS A. LUGO, DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
- LAURA GUGLIELMO AND JJ POPOWICH, ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

## Unwavering Commitment

Hello, LACERA members. As we prepare this issue of *PostScript* toward the end of January, we are just beginning the long assessment and recovery process after the devastating series of storms that hit the state in the last two months. At current count, the flooding took 20 lives, forced thousands to evacuate, and caused billions of dollars in damage.

Thank you to all our members who protected lives and property during this dangerous time, from the equipment operators constructing sand berms on the beaches to the first responders working in treacherous conditions to conduct rescues, evacuate residents, clear roadways, and so much more. Thanks as well to all the behind-the-scenes staff who provided critical communications and operations assistance to get help where it was needed most, and finally, thanks to all of you who continued to show up to work and provide care to our community despite the significant challenges. Your commitment is truly extraordinary.

At press time, we are shaken by the mass shooting that took 11 lives in Monterey Park. Our deepest sympathies go out to the victims, their families, and our Asian American employees, members, and community.

### Promoting Your Value

While public sector workers get more recognition for their service during emergencies, you all deserve

appreciation for your efforts to make our communities strong—day after day, year after year. Making sure that lawmakers and public stakeholders understand your value is part of LACERA's responsibility in protecting your hard-earned benefits, so we continually make the case that having fairly compensated workers and retirees supports the social structure and stabilizes local economies.

To quantify that value, in 2022 we commissioned a report with Beacon Economics, an independent economic research and analysis firm. Among other findings, the report describes how the majority of LACERA members continue to live in California after retirement and boost the economy by billions of dollars, while supporting thousands of jobs and contributing millions in tax revenues.

For more details, visit the news section of [lacera.com](http://lacera.com) and click on the article titled "LACERA Retirees Boost L.A. County Economy by \$2.7 Billion," published December 12, 2022. It includes links to an infographic fact sheet, press release report summary, presentation to LACERA's trustees, and the full Beacon Economics report. We also sent a member email about the report on December 13. If you didn't receive it, be sure to log in to My LACERA to sign up for alerts or double check that we have your current email address.

From the Executive Desk cont'd

## Highlighting Your Service

We have also started a recurring feature in this issue to recognize the service, accomplishments, and contributions made by our members in the course of their careers. See our cover story highlighting several active and retiring members and watch for future issues with more member stories.

## March Madness

It's that time of year! Our busy retirement season is currently underway, and we are working hard to provide counseling and efficiently process applications for members retiring from active service.

Since we do have a higher volume of calls and call lengths through the end of March, if you need something fairly straightforward, like accessing your plan information or changing your address, we recommend that you take advantage of the resources available on lacera.com and My LACERA.

We recently added resources to our website to assist you with your retirement planning and also have webinars geared toward your career stage (see "Quick Clicks" and "Join Us" on page 5).

If you need assistance accessing your My LACERA account, you can call LACERA at 800-786-6464 and click 1 to access the My LACERA support queue for expedited service.

## Strategic Plan Update and Our Latest Improvements

After an extensive and broadly inclusive development process, our strategic plan is in its final preparation stages. Once in place, the plan will guide our efforts for the next several years as we work to optimize existing services and operations in addition to developing new resources for members.

In the meantime, we have recently rolled out or completed major phases of improvements designed to make it easier than ever for you to access services and information. I'm proud of our team for their continued hard work and focus in achieving the following goals.

- Upgraded appointment scheduling system on lacera.com
- Projected May completion of phase 1 of our new case management system
- Enhanced My LACERA security with multi-factor authentication (see page 6)
- Upgraded board meetings section and livestreaming on lacera.com (see page 7)

The final strategic plan is expected to be adopted by LACERA's boards in April, so I anticipate sharing details in the next issue about our new strategic goals and how we plan to achieve them.

Until then, **thank you** for your membership and service. Take care of each other and stay safe.



## Boards Vote to Appeal in County Lawsuit

In October 2021, LACERA filed a lawsuit in Superior Court against the County of Los Angeles and the County Board of Supervisors to confirm the authority for LACERA to independently manage and administer the retirement system—and specifically for LACERA's Board of Retirement and Board of Investments to be authorized to set classifications and salaries for LACERA employees.

After a trial on December 6 and 7, 2022, a Los Angeles Superior Court judge issued his decision on December 22 against LACERA and in favor of the County of Los Angeles and the Board of Supervisors in the lawsuit. The LACERA Boards approved an appeal of the judgment to the California Court of Appeal on January 20, 2023.

LACERA continues to believe that the law requires administration of the retirement system to be performed exclusively by LACERA's independent trustees who owe their sole fiduciary duty to members, and not the County with its broader set of priorities and responsibilities.

While the appeal is pending, LACERA will continue to diligently serve its members, manage the fund's over \$70 billion in assets, and produce, protect, and provide the promised benefits.

## Retiring Member Margarita Lien

Margarita (Maggie) Lien, a division administrator with the Child Support Division, has been with the County for more than 36 years. Among her career achievements, she counts the friendships she has made in her professional journey as one of her most fulfilling experiences.



Margarita Lien

Once she retires from the County, Gomez plans to get a real estate license and continue working part-time. She also hopes to travel to Europe and take on some pastoral pursuits. "I started gardening, so I want to continue that," she says. "Our goal is to live out of state and buy a lot of acreage, because I want a farm."

As part of her retirement process, Lien set up a one-on-one meeting with a LACERA retirement benefits specialist, admitting to feeling nervous, unsure, and even a little scared. She says that her benefits specialist helped her understand the big picture to make the best decision for her future: "I'm very grateful that she took the time to explain everything to me, and I actually feel less stressed now and happy walking out of here today."

Aside from her full-time career, Lien is a wife, mother, grandmother, and caregiver. She relishes the prospect of retirement and plans to spend more time with family and do a little traveling. The self-professed gym rat is also looking forward to participating in classes without having to rush from place to place: "I'm just grateful for the time that I'll have," she says.

## Pre-Retirement Member Cynthia Gomez

An L.A. Superior Court assistant with 24 years on the job, Cynthia Gomez works at the Spring Street location downtown. With her task-oriented disposition, Gomez derives satisfaction from completing her daily responsibilities, clearing her desk, and starting the next day with a clean slate. Working for the country's largest unified court system ensures there is plenty to keep her busy!



Cynthia Gomez

Gomez is hoping to retire in four to five years, so she was excited to meet with a LACERA retirement benefits specialist to learn about the process and find out how much pension income she can expect. "I felt like I learned a lot," she says. "The person that helped me out today was full of information. She took her time with me, and that's what I really loved."

## Pre-Retirement Member Norma Duran

Norma Duran is a staff analyst with Correctional Health Services (CHS) and has worked for the County for 22 years. As the nation's largest county-run correctional health system, CHS is on a mission to remake healthcare for its uniquely underserved population, focusing on social justice medicine and compassionate whole-person care. As part of managing program operations and healthcare delivery, Duran says rewarding aspects of her work include "working with a lot of people from different backgrounds, providing them help with anything they need, and being able to meet our goals."



Norma Duran

Although she isn't planning to retire for at least another 10 years, Duran met with a retirement benefits specialist to make sure she is on track. "I was very concerned as far as the numbers," she says, adding, "I just felt very nervous, not knowing what to expect." Post-consultation, Duran expresses that she is feeling more informed and comfortable about her future, and already starting to put some of her retirement goals into action.

"Right now I'm starting to see if I can plan on going on trips every year with my daughters, and I want to keep it going even until I retire," Duran says. When that day comes, she envisions spending more time traveling, playing tennis, and going to the gym, as well as taking on some new hobbies: "Just a lot of things so I can keep myself busy," she says.

## Taking Your Own Retirement Steps

No matter where **you** are in your career, you should be taking important steps for your financial future now. Visit the [lacera.com](http://lacera.com) Retirement Planning section for guidance and resources. And be sure to watch for next month's issue of *PostScript*, when we'll be featuring another LACERA member and highlighting their contributions!



# LACERA ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## Chief Investment Officer Jon Grabel Receives Investment Industry Recognition

Trusted Insight, an online network of institutional investors, recently recognized LACERA CIO Jon Grabel as one of the top pension executives in the United States in 2022. The list features industry thought leaders who oversee investment teams, expertly navigate the markets, and are instilled with the compassion to serve the beneficiaries of the American public pension system.

To read more, go online to [www.thetrustedinsight.com](http://www.thetrustedinsight.com), click "Top 30 Lists," and select the article entitled "Top Pension Chief Investment Officers."

Congratulations to Jon and the entire Investments team!



Jonathan Grabel

## Join Us: Webinars for All Career Levels

Have you started preparing for retirement? Let us help! LACERA partners with Empower Retirement to host workshops and webinars to help you plan for your future.

- **New Hire orientations** with Empower are held on the first Wednesday of each month. This workshop is geared toward Plan G members who have been working for L.A. County for less than two years and for other new employees who want a refresher on how their pension and 457(b) or 401(k) plans work.
- **Mid-Career seminars** are held on the first Thursday of each month. This seminar is for members in the early to mid-stages of their careers. At this seminar, you will learn how to make sure you are on the right track for retirement.
- **Pre-Retirement workshops** are held every Tuesday (except for Tuesdays immediately

following a holiday). These comprehensive workshops offer valuable retirement strategies and benefits information to help you prepare for a financially secure future. In addition to this workshop, there is a Long-Term Care Insurance Planning session to help you plan or pay for personal care that you may need due to a disability or long-term illness.

- **Retirement Options webinars** are held on Thursdays. These webinars help familiarize you with your retirement options to help you select the option that is best for you. You'll learn how to structure your monthly payments and what continuing benefits you can leave to your beneficiaries.

To register online, visit [lacera.com](http://lacera.com), click "Active Members," and then click "Workshops." We look forward to seeing you!

LACERA.com

## Quick Clicks



## Retirement Planning Made Easy

The key to a successful and financially secure retirement is to start planning years in advance. Wherever you are in your career journey, the Retirement Planning section on [lacera.com](http://lacera.com) has helpful tools for you! Visit [lacera.com](http://lacera.com) > **Active Members > Retirement Planning** to find all the resources available.

For early and mid-career members, we have

the "Steps to Prepare" section, which provides a timeline of action steps to walk you through the retirement planning process and help you prepare for your future.

Or, if you're nearing retirement, use our "Ready to Retire" section, with a helpful to-do list and all the forms and documents you'll need to finish the retirement process.

# A Message from Empower Retirement: **Protect Your County of Los Angeles 457(b) Horizons and 401(k) Savings Plan Accounts**

The County of Los Angeles and Empower are committed to helping you protect your identity, privacy and assets. We want to help you defend yourself against cybersecurity threats, phishing, and other types of fraudulent communications and activities—whether they're conducted through email, text, phone, mail, or social media.

## Follow these tips and best practices:

- **Register your County of Los Angeles 457(b) Horizons and/or 401(k) Savings Plan accounts (if you haven't already) and add your phone number and personal email address information.** Log in to [www.countyla.com](http://www.countyla.com) and register your account to reduce the chance that someone else can access your account or take your account over. Provide your personal email address, check your account frequently, and pay close attention to security alerts that you receive.
- **Choose a stronger username and password.** A username and password unique to your account is the only way to go! Change your passwords often and don't reuse passwords. You can reset your password only through our secure website at [www.countyla.com](http://www.countyla.com).
- **Let us know where to find you.** Keep your personal email and phone number updated for possible security alerts. If our only communication option is through an email address that has been hacked or compromised, then we're only communicating with the fraudster.
- **Always use multi-factor authentication (MFA) and never disable it.** Your 457(b) Horizons

and/or Savings 401(k) account has multi-factor authentication, which sends a one-time code to your cell phone or email account on record, allowing you to access your account securely. Multi-factor authentication requires access to another device, which improves the security of your account. Set up MFA on any account that allows it, and never disable it. Using MFA to your cell phone is one of the best ways to keep fraudsters out of your accounts. It's harder to hack a mobile phone than an email account; as such, consider using text messaging for multi-factor authentication rather than email.

- **Monitor your account: Review your account and respond to security alerts.** Receive status notifications that inform you of account activity. Review security alerts immediately. If you see account activity that you didn't request, contact the Empower Security Center immediately at (844) 773-6797.

Empower will never ask for your password, PIN or account credentials in an unsolicited email, phone call or text message.

Visit [www.empower-retirement.com](http://www.empower-retirement.com) to read about the Security guarantee, tips, and how to protect yourself.



**Your Input is Needed—the 2023 County of L.A. Participant Satisfaction Survey from Empower is live. Scan this QR code or visit [www.surveymonkey.com/r/COLA2023](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/COLA2023) to take it now.**



Securities, when presented, are offered and/or distributed by Empower Financial Services, Inc., Member FINRA/SIPC. EFSI is an affiliate of Empower Retirement, LLC; Empower Funds, Inc.; and registered investment adviser, Empower Advisory Group, LLC. This material is for informational purposes only and is not intended to provide investment, legal or tax recommendations or advice. © 2023 Empower Retirement, LLC. All rights reserved. RO2600359-1222

## Multi-Factor Authentication: Keeping You Secure

Beginning in late December 2022, LACERA rolled out a new feature called multi-factor authentication (MFA) as an important security update to protect your My LACERA account. MFA ensures that it's truly you accessing your information and using your account.

The next time you log in to My LACERA, you will notice an extra step to authenticate your information. You will receive a text message or email (your preference) to instantly confirm your identity. To best use this new feature, please make sure that you have provided your current email address and cellphone number. To update this information, log in to My LACERA and click "Profile" to make your changes. (If you are locked out of your My LACERA account, call

LACERA at 800-786-6464 and choose option 1 to regain access.)

If you previously opted out of receiving text messages from LACERA, you can opt back in to receive your authentication code via text. Just text START to 72049.

Accessing your My LACERA account should be done on your home network, not using public Wi-Fi. You should also check the browser settings on the personal device that you use to access My LACERA. Make sure to permit cookies so that My LACERA remembers your device, so you do not need to use MFA each time you log on.

# 3 THINGS: WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Every March, we celebrate the meaningful contributions made to our nation and society by women. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued a proclamation declaring Women's History Week, followed later by Congress, which established a month-long celebration. As we all work to make the world a more inclusive place, here are three facts to keep in mind for Women's History Month:

**1** The 67th United Nations Commission on the Status of Women takes place March 6 to 17 this year, with the primary themes of innovation, technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender empowerment and equality.



**2** Embrace Equity is the theme for this year's International Women's Day (IWD) on March 8. IWD was first celebrated in 1911 in Denmark, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. The day's purpose is to celebrate women's achievements to create greater equality in all countries.



**3** The National Women's History Alliance has designated 2023's theme as "Celebrating Women Who Tell Our Stories," recognizing past and present women who have been active in all forms of media and storytelling, including print, radio, TV, stage, screen, blogs, podcasts, news, and social media.



Sources: [www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org); [www.internationalwomensday.com](http://www.internationalwomensday.com); and [www.nationalwomenshistoryalliance.org](http://www.nationalwomenshistoryalliance.org)

## HERITAGE MONTHS

### March:

- Gender Equality Month
- Irish American Heritage Month
- Greek American Heritage Month

### April:

- Arab American Heritage Month
- Scottish American Heritage Month

### May:

- Military Appreciation Month
- Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month
- Jewish American Heritage Month

## Attend LACERA Board Meetings—Virtually

We have made it easier than ever to find Board and Committee meeting information on LACERA.com. Our home page has been updated with a Board meeting tile that provides one-click access to our upgraded Board Meetings page ([lacera.com/leadership/board-meetings](http://lacera.com/leadership/board-meetings)). Improvements include a livestream feed, reconfigured calendar of upcoming meetings, archives of prior meetings, agenda materials, and an enhanced search feature.

The Board of Retirement (BOR) meets at 9 a.m. on the first Wednesday of each month unless noted

otherwise. BOR committee meetings are scheduled on the same day as BOR meetings.

The Board of Investments (BOI) meets at 9 a.m. on the second Wednesday of each month unless noted otherwise. BOI committee meetings are scheduled on the same day as BOI meetings.

You can also view previous board meetings on LACERA's YouTube channel. Visit [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and search "LACERA" for a variety of videos, including recorded meetings and retirement information.

Disclaimer: LACERA's YouTube channel is an external website. LACERA does not have control over external websites, and you are subject to those sites' privacy, security, accessibility, and other policies. LACERA is not responsible for, nor does it endorse, content on external websites, including advertisements, promotions, and other videos.

## Public Service Announcement Learn to Apply Advanced Communication Skills

The Los Angeles County Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA) is offering a 25-hour Basic Mediation Skills Workshop this April. The interactive training introduces core principles and methods of Alternative Dispute Resolution through lectures, group discussion, exercises, and role-playing. Course topics include active listening, surfacing the conflict, reframing, communication roadblocks, nonverbal communication, and much more. Participants can expect to learn valuable skills and tools that can help them manage everyday conflict in both personal and professional settings.

As part of the selection process, applicants will be scheduled for an interview. If you are interested in applying, please email your name and telephone number to [DRPAVolunteer@dcba.lacounty.gov](mailto:DRPAVolunteer@dcba.lacounty.gov) no later than April 15, 2023. Additional practical experience and volunteer opportunities may be available through dispute resolution providers.

To find out more about mediation or the agencies that receive DRPA funds to train and supervise mediators in Los Angeles County, visit <https://dcba.lacounty.gov/countywidedrp>.



## Upcoming Holidays

LACERA will be closed on:

- **Monday, March 27**  
For Cesar Chavez Day
- **Monday, May 29**  
For Memorial 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.

LACERA Communications, P.O. Box 7060, Pasadena, CA 91109-7060 • 800-786-6464 • email: [welcomed@lacera.com](mailto:welcomed@lacera.com)

Senior Editor: Sarah Scott Editor: Tom Cohen Contributing Writers: Tom Cohen, James Nicholson, Sarah Scott Designer: Steve Salinas