

LACERA

December 2002
Vol. 13 No. 4

Spotlight on Retirement

LOS ANGELES COUNTY EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT ASSOCIATION • NEWS FOR RETIRED MEMBERS

Welcome, Board Members!

Beginning January 1, 2003, the Board of Investments and the Board of Retirement will officially welcome their reelected and newly elected members. We would like to take this opportunity to introduce them to you now, and also to say farewell to some Board members at the end of their terms. Our next issue of Spotlight will feature members of both Boards who are to receive appointments by the Board of Supervisors.

Board of Investments



Sandra J. Anderson

Elected by retired members, **Sandra J. Anderson** will begin her second three-year term on the

Board of Investments effective January 1, 2003.

Ms. Anderson has made significant contributions to LACERA and its members. During her tenure with the County, she successfully managed staff and expenditures exceeding \$40 million monthly and developed new programs, budgets, and departments. Her County career included serving in the Chief Administrative Office as a Chief Analyst, and various positions in the Department of Public Social

Services including Deputy District Director. In 1989 she was elected to serve on the Board of Investments as a representative of active members. In 2000, the retirees elected her as their representative. Ms. Anderson improved LACERA services to its members by recommending the creation of and funding for the STAR COLA program.

Ms. Anderson has a BA in political science from the University of California at Berkeley, an MA in political science from Atlanta University, an MSW in social welfare from the University of California at Los Angeles, and a JD from Whittier Law School. She is the owner of a law firm that specializes in probate and trust law, estate planning and elder law, and dependency law. She was the Deputy Director for Juvenile and

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Who Is Eligible for Health Care Benefits?

You are eligible to enroll in the LACERA-sponsored Health Care Benefits Program if you are a member of LACERA and retire from:

- The County of Los Angeles or participating agency (even if you did not have medical coverage under an employee health care program while you were an active County employee)

Cont'd on pg. 3

Cont'd on pg. 9

Los Angeles County Employees Retirement Association

Members of the Board of Retirement

LES ROBBINS
Chair
Elected by Safety Members

EDGAR H. TWINE
Vice Chair
Appointed by Board of Supervisors

SIMON S. RUSSIN
Secretary
Elected by General Members

MARK J. SALADINO
County Treasurer & Tax Collector
Ex-Officio Member

SADONYA ANTEBI
Appointed by Board of Supervisors

JOHN FLEMING
Elected by Retired Members

BRUCE PERELMAN
Elected by General Members

WILLIAM PRYOR
Alternate Member
Elected by Safety Members

RICHARD R. WIRTH
Appointed by Board of Supervisors

VACANT
Appointed by Board of Supervisors

Members of the Board of Investments

SANDRAJ. ANDERSON
Chair
Elected by Retired Members

SIMON S. RUSSIN
Vice Chair
Elected by General Members

BRIAN C. BROOKS
Secretary
Elected by General Members

MARK J. SALADINO
County Treasurer & Tax Collector
Member Ex-Officio

CODYFERGUSON
Appointed by Board of Supervisors

LESROBBINS
Elected by Safety Members

SOLOM SOTERAS
Appointed by Board of Supervisors

LARKIN TEASLEY
Appointed by Board of Supervisors

VACANT
Appointed by Board of Supervisors

Chief Executive Officer
MARSHA D. RICHTER
Assistant Executive Officer
GREGG RADEMACHER
Assistant Executive Officer
ROBERT HILL

From the Executive Office

Marsha D. Richter, Chief Executive Officer



LACERA, Past And Present

Season's greetings, members! It's hard to believe that another year has come and gone. With every passing year, LACERA has tried to improve our member services, and we have seen many changes over the past decade—not the least of which, has been the welcoming of a new millennium! For my message in this last month of 2002, I would like to touch upon some of the changes that LACERA has implemented over the past decade. I find that looking over our recent accomplishments is a great way to gear up for the coming year, and also provides LACERA and our members with a sense of where we've been, and where we're headed.

As the world continues to become more reliant on technology, LACERA must evolve with the times. And no decade has had more impact on our record keeping than the last ten years. From annual benefit statements to medical plan records to plan transfers, there isn't very much in our organization that hasn't been translated into computer data. And with all of the personal information we keep, your confidentiality is our top priority. For this reason, it sometimes takes us longer than

we'd like to launch new programs. But when it comes to matters of security, we'd rather be safe than sorry.

Some of our recent technological accomplishments since 1993 include incorporating document imaging technology (which turned our paper-based storage and retrieval system into an electronic one), improving our member database known as the County Employees Retirement Information System (CERIS), building a web site with interactive features, and much, much more.

As well as technological advancements, LACERA has seen significant financial growth. Our retirement fund has grown from \$12 billion in 1993 to \$26 billion in 2002. Yes, the 90s boom years were certainly good for LACERA! Even taking into account the market losses over the past two years, our fund has more than doubled. Prudent financial investments and smart money management by our Board of Investments have contributed to our healthy fund. Another fiscal-related improvement includes vesting the STAR COLA program for retirees, making the annual increase a permanent benefit at 80% for those who qualify.

Board Members! cont'd from pg. 1

Emergency Services and Director of Community Relations for the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, and serves as a consultant and speaker for other organizations nationwide.

Ms. Anderson is a member of the California, Los Angeles, and Beverly Hills Bar Associations, as well as a member of the Black Women Lawyers and the Women Lawyers Associations of Los Angeles. She is happily married to Leon, a County Sheriff's Department retiree. They have three adult children.



Bruce Perelman

Elected by general members, **Bruce Perelman** will begin his three-year term on the Board of Investments

effective January 1, 2003. He is currently completing a three-year term on the Board of Retirement.

Mr. Perelman graduated Summa Cum Laude with an undergraduate degree in civil engineering from Tufts University, and currently works as an engineer for the County's Department of Public Works. In 1994, he passed all three written examinations and the take-home civil engineering examination for state registration as a civil engineer and subsequently he was promoted to a supervising civil engineering position within his department. In 1997, he was hired as a subject matter expert by the State of California to co-author the 1998 State registration examination for

entrance into the profession of civil engineering.

In June 2002, Mr. Perelman was awarded a Master's of Business Administration from the Anderson School of Management at UCLA. In addition to coursework, he gained experience in the for-profit world through an MBA internship at a leading venture capital firm, and later on a four-person team that performed market assessment and strategy formation for the Space and Communications Group of The Boeing Company. He looks forward to using this education and experience during his term on the Board of Investments.

Board of Retirement



Brian C. Brooks

Elected by general members, **Brian C. Brooks** will begin his three-year term on the Board of Retirement effective

January 1, 2003. He is currently completing a three-year term on the Board of Investments.

Mr. Brooks attended Antelope Valley College, Los Angeles City College, Long Beach City College, and Cal-Poly Pomona. Mr. Brooks began County service with the Los Angeles County Flood Control District in 1966. After serving in the U.S. Army from August 1966 to June 1969, including a tour in Vietnam, Mr. Brooks returned to the County and worked in the Civil Engineering Techni-

cian and Valuation Engineering series, becoming a State Certified General Real Estate Appraiser in 1983, appraising commercial, industrial, and residential property. Mr. Brooks is qualified as an Expert Witness in eminent domain in Superior Court as a Valuation Engineer II with the Department of Public Works.

Mr. Brooks is a past President and member of Chapter One of the International Right of Way Association. In addition, he has served as Director and is a member of the California Association of Professional Employees and the County Employees for Fair Retirement Plans. Other memberships include SEIU Local 660 C.O.P.E. Committee, the Chicano Employees Association, the Los Angeles County Filipino American Employees Association, and RELAC.

Mr. Brooks holds a Commercial Pilots License for hot air balloons and single and multi-engine aircraft. He is Instrument Rated and has served as a Captain and Mission Search Pilot for the Civil Air Patrol. He is happily married with two young children at home and three grown children.



Bill De La Garza

Elected by retired members, **William "Bill" De La Garza** will begin his inaugural three-year term on the Board of Retirement effective

January 1, 2003.

Bill started his career as a part-time recreation leader and pool

News From Social Security and Medicare

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security beneficiaries will get a 1.4% cost-of-living increase for benefits payable in 2003. This annual adjustment is based on the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W). The Social Security taxable earnings base will be \$87,000. There is no change in the 6.5 payroll tax rate for employees. For a complete listing of all the changes, visit the Social Security Administration online at www.ssa.gov.

Social Security	2002	2003
Earnings required to earn one credit	\$870	\$890
Earnings required to earn the maximum of four credits	\$3,480	\$3,560
FICA tax rate remains at 7.65% for both employees and employers Social Security		
Retirement Earnings Test exempt amounts for beneficiaries:		
• under "Full Retirement Age" (FRA, age 65) throughout 2003*		\$11,520
• FRA in 2003 (period before the month FRA is attained)		\$30,720
• Month in which FRA is attained and later		no limit
Earnings threshold for a trial-work-period month for disability beneficiaries		\$570
Monthly substantial gainful activity (SGA) amount for:		
• Non-blind disability beneficiaries		\$800
• Blind disability beneficiaries		\$1,330
Maximum monthly retirement benefit at FRA	\$1,660	\$1,741
Estimated average monthly benefits in January		
• Retired workers		\$895
• Retired couples		\$1,483
• Disabled workers		\$833
• Young widow and two eligible children		\$1,838

*As a result of legislation passed in 1983, the Social Security full retirement age will slowly rise from 65 (for persons born before 1938) to 67 (for persons born after 1959). The early retirement ages, however, will remain unchanged.

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Board Members! cont'd from pg. 3

lifeguard for the Los Angeles City Schools and the City and County of Los Angeles while attending El Camino Jr. College and the University of Southern California. In 1960 he accepted a full-time position with the County of Los Angeles as an Assistant Park Director. He enjoyed working with the public and during his 35-year tenure with the Department of Parks and Recreation he paid his dues as Park Director, Sports Specialist, Director of Sports and Aquatics, Superintendent of Regional Recreation, and Regional Operations Manager. In 1991 he retired from his County career as Deputy Director of Parks and Recreation.

While employed with the Department of Parks and Recreation, Bill served on the Southern California Committee for the Olympic Games, the committee that is credited for bringing the 1984 Olympic games to Los Angeles. In 1975-76, he was Chairman of the Los Angeles County Interagency Scuba Diving Committee, and played a key role in the development and passage of the Los Angeles County Scuba Diving Safety Ordinance. He continued his love for sports by

officiating and instructing high school and college officials for the Southern California Baseball, Basketball and Football Associations. Bill authored three recognized sports officiating publications and served as President and Director of the Southern California Municipal Athletic Federation. He worked closely with national sports celebrities Jesse Owens and Pele in developing and establishing national youth sports programs and is a guest lecturer in Recreation and Sports Administration at local community colleges and universities.

Other professional affiliations include being the Board member and Chairman of the Southland Credit Union for over 20 years, honorary member of the Latino Peace Officers Association, Board member of the United Hispanic Scholarship Foundation, and former member of the LA County Interagency Gang Task Force. He is currently Vice President of the California Retired County Employees Association (CRCEA). Bill credits RELAC for sparking his interest and commitment in serving and assisting retired county employees. He served RELAC as Chairman of its Golf

and Investment Committees and is currently serving his second term as RELAC President.

Bill is happily married to his wife of 41 years, Rachel, and has one son named John. His hobbies include traveling, golf and U.S.C. Football.

Thank You and Farewell!

For those members whose terms end on December 31, 2002, we wish to extend our heartfelt thanks for your hard work and dedication to making LACERA a better institution for all members. Once the Board of Supervisors announces their appointments, we may very well be welcoming back some of you, as well! In any case, we wish to express our sincere gratitude for your time and energy. Thank you!

Board of Retirement

Sadonya Antebi
John F. Fleming
Richard R. Wirth
Bruce Perelman

Board of Investments

Simon S. Russin
Larkin Teasley (re-appointed by
Supervisor Yvonne Braithwaite
Burke)
Daniel Cohen 

A Drop of New Year's Wisdom

Found on the Internet

A well-known speaker started off his seminar by holding up a \$20 bill. In the room of 200, he asked, "Who would like this \$20 bill?" Hands started going up. He continued, "I am going to give this to one of

you, but first let me do this..." He proceeded to crumple up the bill. He then asked, "Who still wants it?" Still, the hands went up. "Well," he replied, "What if I do this?" He dropped the bill on the ground and started to grind it into

the floor with his shoe. He picked it up, now crumpled and dirty. "Now who wants it?" Still, the hands went up.

"My friends," said the speaker, "You have all learned a valuable lesson. No matter what I did to the

Want to Switch Medical Plans?

In most cases, after completing a **six-month waiting period**, you can change from any LACERA-sponsored medical plan into any other. You may also change from the Firefighters Local 1014 plan to a LACERA-sponsored plan. Coverage is continuous and you do not need to provide evidence of insurability.

Procedure for Changing Medical Plans

1. Contact LACERA at (800) 786-6464 and request a Medical Change Form.
2. Fill out the change form completely and be sure to sign it, date it, and keep the bottom copy for yourself.
3. Mail the rest of the form back to LACERA.
4. Coverage takes effect the first day of the month after completion of a **six-month waiting period**. The waiting period begins when your Medical Change Form is received by LACERA.

Exceptions to the Six-month Waiting Period

- You move out of your HMO service area
- You are currently enrolled in Blue Cross of California and move out of the Prudent Buyer network area
- You change from Blue Cross I, Blue Cross II, CIGNA, Kaiser Permanente **into** Kaiser Senior Advantage, Secure Horizons, CIGNA Healthcare for Seniors, or SCAN
- You change from Blue Cross **into** Blue Cross II
- You change from Blue Cross I or II **into** Blue Cross III

If you qualify for an exception to the waiting period:

Your change form must be received by the 15th day of any month to go into effect on the first day of the month following your request. For example, if your form is received by **June 15**, your plan change will be effective **July 1**.

If you are changing into a Medicare HMO plan:

Your change form must be received by the 15th day of any month to go into effect on the first day of the second month following your request. For example, if your form is received by **June 15**, your plan change will be effective **August 1**.

Want to Switch Dental/Vision Plans?

You can switch between the LACERA-sponsored Dental/Vision plans in most cases. You can switch plans after completing a **one-year waiting period**. Coverage is continuous and you do not need to provide evidence of insurability.

Procedure for Changing Dental Plans

1. Contact LACERA at (800) 786-6464 and request a **Dental Change Form**.
2. Fill out the change form completely and be sure to sign it, date it, and keep the bottom copy for yourself.
3. Mail the rest of the form back to LACERA.

4. Coverage takes effect the first day of the month after completion of a one-year waiting period. The waiting period begins when your Dental Change Form is received by LACERA.

Exception to the One-Year Waiting Period

- You move out of your HMO service area

If you qualify for an exception to the waiting period:

Your change form must be received by the 15th day of any month to go into effect on the first day of the month following your request. For example, if your form is received by **June 15**, your plan change will be effective **July 1**. 

Past and Present cont'd from pg. 2

LACERA's additions to our member service offerings are also ever evolving. In the past 10 years, our in-house training program has significantly improved our customer service as we reach toward our goal of One Call, One Response, 100% Accuracy. This year alone we created three new divisions to help streamline and

improve our customer services. And finally, on the health care front, this year LACERA celebrated our 11th Annual Health Fair for retirees, and implemented Caremark's "CarePatterns" disease management program.

As we welcome 2003, I look forward to our continued improvement in every aspect of our busi-

ness, including member benefits, fiscal growth and technological advancements. Our business is serving you, our members, and to that end our work is never done. LACERA is your retirement system, and it is our privilege to be of service to you. Happy New Year! 

Social Security cont'd from pg. 4

MEDICARE

There is no change in the Medicare tax of 1.45% on all earnings. The standard Medicare Part B monthly premium will be \$58.70 in 2003, up from \$54 in 2002.

Medicare	2002	2003
Part A (Hospital Insurance) voluntary monthly premium for persons not eligible for premium-free Part A	\$319	\$316
Part A reduced monthly premium for persons with 30-39 credits	\$175	\$174
Part B (Medical Insurance) standard monthly premium	\$54	\$58.70
ORIGINAL MEDICARE PLAN		
Part A inpatient deductible per benefit period		\$840
Part A daily coinsurance 61st through 90th days		\$210
Part A daily coinsurance for up to 60 "lifetime reserve" days		\$420
Part A daily coinsurance 21st through 100th days in a skilled nursing facility		\$105
Part B annual deductible		\$100 

A Drop of Wisdom cont'd from pg. 5

money, you still wanted it because it did not decrease in value. It was still worth \$20. Many times in our lives we are dropped, crumpled, and ground into the dirt by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way. We feel

that we are worthless. But no matter what has happened or what will happen, you will never lose your value. Dirty or clean, crumpled or finely creased, you are still priceless to those who love you. The worth of our lives comes not

in what we do or in whom we know, but by who we are. You are special—don't ever forget it!"

In 2003, try to remember to always count your blessings and not your problems. Happy New Year! 

Do you have questions regarding your retirement benefits?

Telephone LACERA at
626-564-6132
800-786-6464

FAX: 626-564-6155

Your Social Security number is the key to finding your records.

We thank you for your patience and understanding when you call.

welcome@lacera.com

Now you can e-mail LACERA to ask about general retirement information. Just use the LACERA e-mail address shown above. If you have specific questions about your benefits or need to resolve any issues affecting your personal retirement account, please contact LACERA at

800-786-6464

and ask to speak to a Retirement Benefits Specialist.

Taxes

Many members take a look at their tax picture at the end of the year and decide to change their withholding amounts. Some of you find, to your dismay, that you owe more money for withholding taxes. Others have overpaid and will receive a refund.

No matter what your tax situation is, we recommend consulting your tax advisor to get a picture of where you stand. If you need to make changes, you have three options:

1. Standard deduction (claiming the number of deductions you wish);
2. A combination of standard deductions plus a set dollar amount; and
3. A set dollar amount.

You can change your withholding amounts by requesting a tax form (we will provide the W-4/DE-4 forms for your convenience) and sending it back with your new designations. We must receive the form before the 15th of any month for the change to take place at the end of that month.

Survivor Benefits

One of the big changes in our payroll process is our new survivor process. Now we are able to pay the eligible surviving spouse a check at the end of the month the member was deceased. When we receive a report of a member's

death, claim forms are generated for the survivor.

If all information about the spouse is on record, the survivor process moves forward, paying the spouse a benefit for two months, which allows time to collect the death certificate and return the claim forms. During this process, LACERA will remind the survivor to submit claim forms, in case he or she does not react in the first month after the spouse's death. Our goal is to make things as easy as possible for a surviving spouse during a very difficult time.

If information about a spouse or a beneficiary is missing, such as the birth date, marriage date, Social Security number, or the address of the survivor/beneficiary, the process becomes more involved and may create a delay. In addition to the above information, we may also request the certified death certificate, phone number of the contact person, and in some cases the certified marriage certificate. Once we receive these items or documents, we will be able to proceed with the process.

Looking Ahead

Although thinking about death can be difficult, it's always wise to plan ahead. Take a moment to review the information we have on file for you, and confirm with us that it is all up-to-date. Make sure

Health Care Benefits cont'd from pg. 1

Eligible Dependents (while member is alive) Include:

- Your lawful spouse unless legally separated
- Your unmarried natural or legally adopted children or stepchildren until age 19 (or until age 23 while enrolled as full-time students at an accredited or licensed educational institution*) and depend on you for financial support
- Your unmarried dependent children age 19 or over who are incapable of self-support due to a physical or mental handicap and meet all the following requirements:
 - The dependent child's disability began before age 19 (or 23 while enrolled as a full-time student at an educational institution), and
 - The child is fully dependent on you for financial support, and
 - The child has been continuously covered by a County-sponsored plan, and/or you can provide proof that the disabled child meets the above conditions and has been continuously covered by any other group or individual medical insurance plan, and
 - You can provide medical evidence of total disability subject to the conditions of both LACERA

and the plan in which the member is enrolled.

- Other dependent(s) defined by specific law and plan contracts.

Eligible Survivors (after member dies) Include:

- *Surviving Spouse*
Your surviving spouse who is eligible to continue to receive retirement benefits, and to whom you were married for at least one year prior to your retirement date, and is named as the primary beneficiary. If you were granted a service-connected disability, the one-year rule does not apply, however the date of your marriage must precede the date of your retirement.
- *Surviving Children (if there is also a surviving spouse)*
Your surviving unmarried natural children, legally adopted children, or stepchildren, up to age 19 or until age 23, if they remain unmarried and enrolled as full-time students at an accredited or licensed educational institution.*
- *Surviving Children (without a surviving spouse)*
Your surviving unmarried natural children, legally adopted children, or stepchildren, up to age 18 or until age 22 who are enrolled as full-time students at an accredited

or licensed educational institution* and receiving retirement benefits. These eligibility requirements apply if there are only surviving dependent children, with no surviving spouse.

- *Surviving Disabled Dependents*
Your disabled dependent children who satisfy each requirement described above.

Eligible New Dependents Include:

- A new spouse
- Newborn child
- Newly acquired legally adopted children and stepchildren

You must contact LACERA to enroll these dependents **within 30 days of the date they become eligible family members.** If your enrollment form is received by the 15th of the month, coverage begins the first day of the month following the date of the qualifying event.

If you are married, both you and your dependents must enroll in the same plan. Split enrollment among family members—enrolling in different LACERA-sponsored health plans—is not permitted (unless both spouses are LACERA retirees).

If you are married to someone who is also a LACERA retiree, each of

Cont'd on pg. 10

* If your eligible dependent ceases to be enrolled on a full-time basis at an accredited educational institution and loses eligibility, then subsequently re-enrolls as a full-time student, he/she establishes immediate eligibility upon re-enrollment. It is your responsibility to notify LACERA within 30 days of the date of re-enrollment to add him/her to your plan(s).

Transamerica Long Term Care Insurance Plan 2003 Seminar Schedule

Mark your calendars for the upcoming Wednesday seminars!

January 8	July 9
February 12	August 13
March 12	September 10
April 9	October 8
May 14	November 12
June 11	December 10

Location:

LACERA (Gateway Plaza)
300 N. Lake Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91101
First Floor, Workshop Room



To make a reservation, please call the Transamerica insurance agency at 800-207-9883. 

Health Care Benefits cont'd from pg. 9

you may choose coverage under a different plan. However, you may not enroll your spouse as a dependent under your coverage if he or she also enrolls as an eligible retiree.

Important Note: You must marry at least one year preceding the date of your retirement, or your new spouse and your new spouse's dependents will not be eligible to continue coverage in a LACERA-sponsored insurance plan following your death, except for a limited period of time through COBRA. 

*“Live so that
you could
sell the family
parrot to the
town gossip.”*

—Will Rogers



Life's Truths Anonymous from the Internet

According to Children

1. No matter how hard you try, you can't baptize cats.
2. You can't trust dogs to watch your food.
3. Don't sneeze when someone is cutting your hair.
4. You can't hide a piece of broccoli in a glass of milk.
5. When your mom is mad at your dad, don't let her brush your hair.

According to Adults

1. Raising teenagers is like nailing Jell-O to a tree.
2. Wrinkles don't hurt.
3. Middle age is when you choose your cereal for the fiber, not the toy.
4. Today's mighty oak is just yesterday's nut that held its ground.
5. Laughing is good exercise—it's like jogging on the inside.

According to Seniors

1. Forget the health food—you need all the preservatives you can get.
2. When you fall down, you wonder what else you can do when you're down there.
3. You're getting old when you get the same sensation from rocking in a chair that you used to get from a rollercoaster.
4. Time may be the great healer, but it's a lousy beautician.
5. You know all the answers, but nobody bothers to ask you the questions.

The Four Stages of Life

1. You believe in Santa Claus.
2. You don't believe in Santa Claus.
3. You are Santa Claus.
4. You look like Santa Claus. 

Sweet Potato or Yam? What's the Difference?

Excerpted from *The Wellness Letter*

What we commonly call yams are actually sweet potatoes, which are not really potatoes at all, but strange roots, like carrots. (Real potatoes are storage stems, or tubers.) True yams belong to another plant family entirely. You will seldom see a true yam in this country, except in specialty markets. If you did find one, it would be pale and starchy, with a rough and scaly skin. Called njami, true yams are grown in Africa as well as the Caribbean; sweet potatoes are grown all over the world. Sweet potatoes have darker reddish-brown skin and dark orange flesh. There are, however, at least four varieties, some with lighter skins,

some with red-purple skins, and also variations in flesh color. (Canned sweet potatoes are often also labeled “yams,” since that’s what most people call them.)

Nutritionally, you’re way ahead with sweet potatoes, which are one of the most nutritious vegetables. Their bright orange color comes from beta carotene, and a medium baked sweet potato contains about 10 milligrams, a hefty amount, plus about 30 milligrams of vitamin C, some B vitamins (including folic acid), vitamin E, magnesium, and calcium. The true yam has no beta carotene and half the vitamin C, but is richer in potassium.

In spite of their sweet taste,

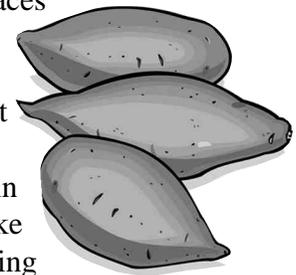
sweet potatoes are not high in calories. They have the same number of calories as white potatoes, about 100 per 3.5-ounce serving. They are usually inexpensive, too, and can be quickly cooked in their skins in a microwave. Just pierce them in several places

before cooking.

Raw sweet potatoes,

when cut in strips, make good dipping vegetables.

A cold baked sweet potato, once a lunch box staple, is a great snack, too! 🌱



Taxes cont'd from pg. 8

we have your spouse’s Social Security number on file, as well as addresses and phone numbers so we can contact those who are dear to you.

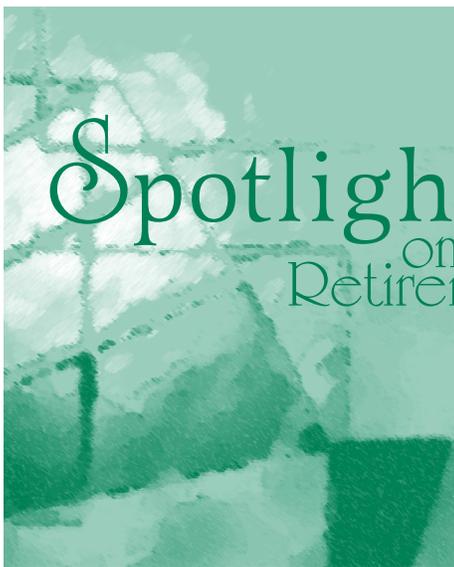
If your spouse is deceased, please update your beneficiary information and make sure we

have contact addresses and phone numbers. We also need a copy of the spouse’s death certificate.

If you wish someone other than your named beneficiary to receive the \$5,000 burial benefit, please provide that information on the beneficiary form.

The key to assisting those whom you love is to take the necessary steps ahead of time. By following the old adage, “an ounce of prevention prevents a pound of cure,” you’ll be making what is sure to be a difficult transition just a little easier. 🌱

Taxes



STAR COLA Approved for 2003

On November 6, 2002, the Board of Retirement voted to fund the 2003 STAR COLA Program at an 80% benefit level at a projected cost of \$18,000 (as determined by LACERA's actuary, Milliman USA). STAR COLA means Supplemental Targeted Adjustment for Retirees Cost-of-Living Adjustment. This benefit is paid in addition to the monthly allowance.

Many retirees received the STAR COLA benefit last year, which was vested at 80%. Those contributory plan members will continue to receive that amount for life. It has become part of their base pay.

This year, a small number of retirees became eligible to receive

a STAR COLA benefit, because the purchasing power of their original retirement allowance fell below 80% due to inflation. Those who are eligible retired between April 1, 1977 and March 31, 1985, and their STAR COLA increase equals one tenth of one percent of their base pay. That amount will be vested and become a part of their basic retirement allowance for life.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) percentage change from January through December is compared to the maximum allowable cost-of-living percentage increase payable by LACERA on April 1 (3% for plan A and 2% for plans B, C, and D). In years where the change in CPI is greater than

the maximum cost-of-living increase, the difference between these two percentages is accumulated annually for each retiree and is called the Cost-of-Living (COLA) Percentage Accumulation. The accumulation of differences each year reflects how much purchasing power has been lost from a retiree's original retirement benefit. By law, the Board of Retirement may provide STAR increases after the accumulation exceeds 20%. 

Editor's Note

Spotlight on Retirement is published by the staff of LACERA. Signed articles represent the opinion of the writers and not necessarily the opinion of the LACERA Management, Board of Retirement or Board of Investments. Contributing Writers: Alice Natale

Alison Herschberg

Design: Courtney Cook

Letters to the Editor may be sent to:
Delia Price – Editor-in-Chief

SPOTLIGHT ON RETIREMENT
LACERA
PO BOX 7060
PASADENA, CA 91109-7060

Alternative formats are available upon request.

"Thanks for Calling!"



To ensure that every LACERA member gets the best possible service from our Retirement Benefits Specialists, we have instituted a policy of recording all phone conversations with members. These phone calls

are randomly selected and reviewed by our Quality Assurance section. Members who do not wish to be recorded may request a call back from a Retirement Benefits Specialist on an unmonitored phone .