

P.S.

POST SCRIPT

NEWS FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS

MARCH 2021 • VOL. 32, NO. 1

Staying Sharp: Keep Your Mind Fit



There are many opportunities to stay mentally active from the comfort of your own home. Some of these activities can simply be fun or enriching, but there are also opportunities to help you further your career.

Develop Your Professional Skills

Did you know that all permanent, full-time County employees have access to the Udemy for Business online training video course catalog? You can choose from over 3,000 courses in everything from software skills to leadership development. Visit the Udemy Learning Program page at <https://employee.hr.lacounty.gov/udemy-learning/> to get started. Don't wait to sign up; free access will expire on June 30.

Embrace Lifelong Learning

There are many websites and online resources that offer university courses or general information for free on hundreds of subjects. Check out www.openculture.com/ freeonlinecourses.com/ for links to courses created by universities like Stanford, MIT, and Oxford.

You can also "audit" virtual classes from many universities for free through Coursera (www.coursera.org) and edX (www.edx.org). Just search for the subject you're interested in and enroll.

Learning a new language is proven to enhance critical thinking skills and sharpen mental dexterity. There are many free options to learn new languages or practice ones you already know. Visit Open

Culture's language portal at www.openculture.com/freelanguagelessons for resources to learn more than 40 different languages.

Educating yourself can be as simple as reading a book. You can find pretty much every book written before 1922 for free online on sites like Project Gutenberg

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Los Angeles County Employees Retirement Association

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 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 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

SHAWN R. KEHOE

Elected by Safety Members

RONALD OKUM

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

GINA V. SANCHEZ

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

HERMAN B. SANTOS

Elected by General Members

Chief Executive Officer
SANTOS H. KREIMANN

Assistant Executive Officer
JJ POPOWICH

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DESK

SANTOS H. KREIMANN CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Getting Better

Hello members, I hope the year is off to a good start for you and your families and that you are staying physically and mentally healthy.

It has already been an eventful first quarter of 2021. As we mark one year since the pandemic started, an ambitious national vaccine rollout is now underway. Our continued gratitude goes out to all of you still working on the frontlines; we sincerely hope that you will soon get some relief.

“ Similar to how people start off the year with goals of self-improvement, LACERA’s executive and management teams are focusing their efforts in 2021 on creating a better organization. ”

Here at LACERA, we are focused on many simultaneous priorities, including reopening our Member Service Center (MSC) and bringing more of our staff back to our Pasadena offices this year. To ensure that happens successfully, we have robust health and safety

protocols in place and have made physical modifications to create a safe working (and visiting) environment and ensure there are no interruptions due to illness. We are also encouraging our employees to get vaccinated when eligible, understanding that other County workers have higher priority. As planning efforts for our reopening continue, we will keep you posted via emails, lacera.com, and our newsletters. We hope to welcome you back soon!

March Madness

As of publication time, we are in the peak member retirement season we call March Madness, with a high volume of retirement requests this year. To compensate for the closure of the MSC, we expanded our call center hours to include Saturdays during the months of January and February, and continued to provide virtual one-on-one counseling sessions. Thank you to all of our staff members who worked under challenging conditions to ensure our members could transition seamlessly to retirement. A special shout-out goes to our Document Processing Center employees, who worked long hours onsite to ensure all members’ retirement and healthcare paperwork was processed timely.

Setting Up for Success

Many people start off the year with goals of self-improvement. Likewise, LACERA's executive and management teams are focusing their efforts in 2021 on creating a better organization, now that we have transformed and stabilized our day-to-day operations in response to the pandemic. I am excited to tell you about the initiatives we are undertaking to improve LACERA not just this year, but into the future.

We recently changed our organizational structure to better delineate duties and refine operations, and created a deputy chief executive officer position, currently in recruitment. Our chosen candidate is slated to begin in March, at about the time this issue hits your mailbox. We should also fill the open assistant executive officer position by April to oversee the administrative and support functions critical for the seamless delivery of services to our members. With these administrative and operational positions filled, we will be able to concentrate on LACERA's direction and vision, including completing our current strategic goals and setting our future path as approved by our Trustees.

As part of that, in January we launched an employee engagement program, facilitated by the Institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement, to create higher levels of employee satisfaction

and performance. This will ultimately benefit members in the form of better services and a stronger, more stable LACERA. We began with a confidential LACERA-wide survey of all staff members, encouraging them to provide candid feedback about their jobs, duties, work environment, and connection to our mission. We will use the survey results to address areas of weakness by creating actionable items, addressing training and opportunity gaps, and setting accomplishment milestones for the months and years ahead.

We have also progressively increased our cybersecurity, business continuity, and data recovery capabilities to ensure that your benefits are adeptly delivered and your personal information remains protected in the event of any kind of natural disaster or other disruption. I am proud to report that we recently conducted successful data and application recovery exercises and tested our business continuity protocols, and are incorporating lessons learned as we make continual improvements to our systems.

New Lacera.com Launches in July

I have more exciting news: A completely revamped lacera.com will be launching in July. This project has been produced entirely in-house by staff members from our Systems and Communications teams, with input from subject matter experts and divisions across LACERA, as well as member

volunteers. The new site boasts a modern look, responsive design, and more interactivity. In addition, we have reorganized and streamlined the existing content so you can find the information you need quickly and easily. But that is only the start—going forward we will be adding more features, content, and self-service capabilities based on member needs and feedback. Look for more details in our next issue, where we will be highlighting some of the site's new design and navigation features.

Welcome Back

Congratulations to Trustees Alan Bernstein, Ronald Okum, and Gina Zapanta on their new seats and reappointment to the Boards, respectively. (See Accomplishments on page 4 for more details.) Thank you all for your continued service and leadership during this important time for LACERA.

Forging Ahead

We have much to accomplish in the years to come, and I am committed to keeping you, our members, informed about the actions we are taking as we evolve LACERA. I appreciate all of you who have provided your feedback about your expectations of us and the services you need. Please continue to reach out, as your input is vital to our improvement.

Until next time, take care and stay safe.

Santos H. Kreimann



LACERA ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Welcome Back, Board Trustees

Congratulations to Trustees Alan Bernstein, Ronald Okum, and Gina Zapanta on their appointments and reappointment to the Boards for 2021 to 2023.



Alan Bernstein

Mr. Bernstein has been appointed to the fourth seat on the Board of Retirement, where he is serving as the Board's Chair. Mr. Bernstein serves on the Boards' Audit Committee and Joint Organizational Governance Committee. In addition, Mr. Bernstein is concurrently serving on the Board of Investments.



Ronald Okum

Mr. Okum has been appointed to the sixth seat on the Board of Investments. He also currently serves on the Board of Retirement. Mr. Okum serves on many of the Boards' committees, including the Audit Committee and Operations Oversight Committee.



Gina Zapanta

Ms. Zapanta has been reappointed to the ninth seat on the Board of Retirement. She is serving as the Board of Retirement's Secretary, and sits on the Disability Procedures and Services Committee.

LACERA Receives 18th PPCC Award

Last November, the Public Pension Coordinating Council (PPCC) awarded LACERA with the Public Pension Standards 2020 Award, in recognition of meeting professional standards for plan funding and administration as set forth in the Public Pension Standards. These standards are intended to reflect



minimum expectations for public retirement systems management and administration and serve as a benchmark by which all defined benefit public plans should be measured. LACERA is an 18-time recipient of this important award.

You Can Now Go Paperless

LACERA now offers you the opportunity to opt out of receiving physical copies of certain documents and publications in the mail. To opt in to digital versions of your documents, log in to your My LACERA account and click on the Document Delivery Option. There you can choose digital or mail delivery for automatic deposit receipts (ADRs), annual benefits statements (ABS), and newsletters.

Once you enroll, you'll receive a confirmation email to ensure that your request has been processed and your email has been verified.

3 THINGS: HOCKEY

Have you ever gone to a boxing match and had a hockey game break out? Joking aside, hockey is a lot more than brawling. It's a unique and challenging sport played at a fast pace. Here are three facts about hockey to help familiarize yourself with the NHL:



1 While the exact origin of ice hockey is often disputed, there is a mixture of English, Scottish, Irish, and Native American influences in the sport's creation. The first indoor ice hockey game was played in Montreal, Quebec in 1875.

2 Wayne Gretzky, or "The Great One," tallied a career 894 goals and 1,963 assists for a total of 2,857 points. In distant second place is Jaromir Jagr with 1,921 points.

Sources: britannica.com;
thehockeywriters.com;
mentalfloss.com

3 The Stanley Cup trophy has been awarded to the champions since 1893. The winning team members' names are engraved on it and each player gets to spend a day with the cup.

Notice of LACERA Elections for General Members

In August, the County is holding elections for the third trustee seats on both the Board of Retirement and the Board of Investments. The current Board trustees' terms expire on December 31, 2021, with the newly elected trustees taking office on January 1, 2022.

Additional information about the elections and voting options will be sent to your County email address in May.



A Message From the County and Empower Retirement: We Want to Hear From You!



The County of Los Angeles 457(b) Horizons and 401(k) Savings Plans, in partnership with Empower Retirement, are conducting a survey of our participants. This survey is voluntary and confidential.

The Participant Satisfaction Survey is more than gauging how employees feel about the Deferred Compensation Plans; it helps the County and Empower Retirement determine what products and services may be needed to help support your overall goal of retirement readiness.

We are interested in your feedback, and your input will help us identify ways to better meet your needs.

Visit bit.ly/3igoouV to access the survey!





Let's Get Vaccinated

COVID-19 has defined the last year of our lives. Thankfully, that may not be true for much longer. Several vaccines have already received FDA approval, and millions of individuals are already receiving their shots.

Because current vaccine supplies are limited and require two doses, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has prioritized the most at-risk groups (tiers) that should be vaccinated first—starting with healthcare workers, first responders, and seniors.

Many public facilities like Dodger Stadium and Hansen Dam are being converted for vaccination distribution. To find out your tier, and when and where you might have access to the vaccine, visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/vaccine. You can provide your email address on the site to receive County updates regarding the rollout.

If you live outside of L.A. County, visit your state or county health department website for local vaccine distribution information.

You can also check with your County health insurance provider at the website or phone number provided below.

- Kaiser Permanente: Visit <https://healthy.kaiserpermanente.org/southern-california/health-wellness/coronavirus-information/covid-vaccine> or call 800-464-4000.
- Anthem Blue Cross: Visit www.anthem.com/coronavirus/blog/well-being-and-community/3-things-about-the-coronavirus-vaccine/ or call 800-284-1110.

Los Angeles County is following the State of California's Blueprint for a Safer Economy to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. This color-coded tier system illustrates how widespread the rate of infection is across California.

Visit covid19.ca.gov/safer-economy for information about how the County infection rate affects when offices like LACERA's will reopen.

Stay Tuned in During an Emergency

You're prepared for anything; you already know what to do when a disaster strikes. But it's just as important to stay informed after an emergency occurs. Signing up for emergency alerts keeps you up to date on all the vital info you need.

The County offers a free, mass notification system for residents and businesses. The Sheriff's Department will contact you directly when there is a disaster in your community and provide information about evacuation or other instructions you'll need. Visit www.lacounty.gov/emergency/alert-la/ to register, or find your specific community's alert system at

www.lacounty.gov/emergency/alert-la/find-your-emergency-notification-system-2/.

Remember that in an emergency, your internet access may be limited. Local radio stations will broadcast emergency alerts on the following stations: 640 AM, 1070 AM, 106.7 FM, and 93.1 FM, among others. For a full list of stations visit www.ready.lacounty.gov/media/.

Don't forget to enroll in COVID-19 exposure tracking provided by the State of California at www.canotify.ca.gov.

Staying Sharp: Keep Your Mind Fit cont'd from pg. 1

(www.gutenberg.org). Prefer to listen? You can find thousands of audiobooks on the L.A. Public Library website at www.lapl.org/audiobooks.

All the World's Your Stage

Music can do more than improve your mood, it also eases pain, improves cognition, and can even curb cravings. Thankfully, free music isn't limited to the radio. Visit the Grammy Museum (www.grammymuseum.org) to see their exhibits, stream their collections, and take online mini lessons.

The Los Angeles Opera is currently streaming recorded performances of their operas for free online. Visit www.laopera.org to watch digital performances of *Modulation*, *The West Is a Land of Infinite Beginnings*, *Prism*, and many other shows.

If the play's your thing, the Getty and Center Theatre Group have partnered to bring The Greek Trilogy of Luis Alfaro to on-demand streaming. These shows—*Electricidad*, *Oedipus El Rey*, and *Mojada*—are Chicana

adaptations of classic Greek plays, in streamed readings filmed at the Kirk Douglas Theatre. Visit www.centertheatregroup.org/digitalstage/digital-stage/luis-alfaros-trilogy for more information on how to watch.

Working from home doesn't mean we can't live from home, too. Let's stay active, motivated, and healthy. Or, as Robert Collier once put it, "Success is the sum of small efforts repeated day in and day out."

Your Safety, Our Concern
Encountering Wildlife in Southern California

Los Angeles County and the surrounding areas are home to a large population of humans, pets, and wild animals. Many neighborhoods have seen a recent increase in wildlife activity. Common fauna in Southern California includes rattlesnakes, coyotes, racoons, mountain lions, bobcats, and opossums.

In case you encounter any of these creatures, here are some reminders to keep you safe:

- Do not leave out any garbage. Food waste is a major attractor for wild animals.
- Keep your pets inside at night to keep them safe.
- If you encounter a wild animal, pick up your children or pets and try to appear as large as you can to scare the animal away.
- Do not approach a wild animal. Make sure the animal has a clear path away from you, so it does not feel the need to fight its way out.
- Should you encounter a coyote, do not turn your back or run away from it. Instead, stand your ground, make loud noises, and wave your arms above your head.

We hope you continue to stay safe while enjoying all the natural beauty in our area.

FRAUD ALERT
From the D.A.'s Office
SCAMMERS OFFER EARLY
STIMULUS PAYMENTS TO STEAL
YOUR MONEY

If someone offers to send you federal stimulus money by check or direct deposit, ignore it. It's a scam!

In the Stimulus Check Scam, con artists, possibly impersonating a popular retailer, target their victims with the promise of sending a quick stimulus check disbursement.

Crooks ask for an upfront payment to receive the aid or for your Social Security number, bank account, or credit card details to steal your personal information.

Tips:

- Do not pay a fee to receive government aid.
- Do not give your Social Security number, bank account, or credit card information.
- If you suspect fraudulent activity, contact the Federal Trade Commission at www.ftc.gov/complaint.

Visit lacera.com/about_lacera/fraud_alerts.html for a link with more details.



Our newly redesigned website is almost ready to launch! With input from our members, we have completely restructured and reorganized lacera.com.

We will go live this July. Watch for more details in our next issue of *PostScript*!



Upcoming Holidays

LACERA will be closed on:

- **Monday, March 29**
Cesar Chavez Day
- **Monday, May 31**
Memorial Day

“Life must be lived and curiosity kept alive. One must never, for whatever reason, turn their back on life.”

—Eleanor Roosevelt



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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