

P.S.

POST SCRIPT

NEWS FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS

DECEMBER 2022 • VOL. 33, NO. 4



Creating New Ways to Serve You

In the last issue of *PostScript*, we described our ongoing efforts to improve service, reduce call wait times, and provide you with convenient new options for getting information and conducting transactions with LACERA. Those efforts continue, as we strive to continually evolve and raise the bar of service.

Following are some highlights of recently completed projects that we are excited to share with you. Although they may seem unrelated on the surface, they have something important in common: They are all aimed at empowering you. We are committed to providing you with

a multitude of ways to interact with LACERA—from self-service through lacera.com and the My LACERA member portal to our Call Center and Member Service Center. LACERA has always provided a highly personalized experience over the phone and onsite, and these channels will always be there for you. But part of our commitment is to provide you with convenient, reliable access to the information and resources you need to confidently conduct self-transactions anytime, without always having to rely on a retirement benefits specialist for assistance. With that in mind, here's what we've been busily creating for you.

Now Showing: My LACERA Walkthrough Video

To make your My LACERA experience smoother, we are proud to introduce a new video that walks you through the site's

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Board of Retirement:

WILLIAM R. PRYOR

Chair
Alternate Trustee
Elected by Safety Members

SHAWN R. KEHOE

Vice Chair
Elected by Safety Members

ALAN J. BERNSTEIN

Secretary
Appointed by Board of Supervisors

ELIZABETH B. GINSBERG

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

VIVIAN H. GRAY

Elected by General Members

JAMES P. HARRIS

Alternate Trustee
Elected by Retired Members

KEITH KNOX

County Treasurer and Tax Collector
Ex-Officio Trustee

WAYNE MOORE

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

GINA ZAPANTA

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

Board of Investments:

HERMAN B. SANTOS

Chair
Elected by General Members

DAVID GREEN

Vice Chair
Elected by General Members

SHAWN R. KEHOE

Secretary
Elected by Safety Members

ELIZABETH B. GINSBERG

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

ELIZABETH GREENWOOD

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

ONYX JONES

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

PATRICK L. JONES

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

JOSEPH KELLY

Elected by Retired Members

KEITH KNOX

County Treasurer and Tax Collector
Ex-Officio Trustee

GINA V. SANCHEZ

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

* 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 CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

All Systems



Wow, that was fast! Seems like 2022 just started, and here we are preparing to close it out already. Because of early print deadlines, holidays celebrations are currently weeks away, but by the time you receive this issue of *PostScript* they will likely be complete. So, it's my sincere wish that you had a happy holiday season and created wonderful memories with your loved ones.



This upcoming year promises to be an exciting one, as we finalize the strategic plan and start working toward our goals.



Since my last article, we are back to our normal hybrid work schedule (after a temporary return to emergency telework procedures over the summer), which is perfect timing as we head into the busy retirement season. Due to our computer and infrastructure

updates, our staff members who work both remotely and onsite are able to switch quickly and effortlessly between their home and office computer environments. This capability is part of LACERA's long-term strategy for business continuity, efficiency, and staffing, and we are pleased that it has come to fruition so successfully.

Major Steps Toward Improved Service

In our cover article, we highlight our latest initiatives to provide you easier access to service, information, and resources. From our new My LACERA walkthrough video and call-line features to step-by-step retiree healthcare form samples, we are dedicated to making your LACERA experience better. Be sure to explore the new ways we are serving you!

Strategic Planning: The Final Stretch

As of the year-end, LACERA's executive team is preparing to present our strategic plan to the boards for review and approval. Thank you for taking part in the process through our member survey, and congratulations on

Creating New Ways to Serve You cont'd from pg. 1

functionality and how to use it. Watch the video now by going to lacera.com and clicking on the "Sign Up for MY LACERA!" tile on the homepage.

Highlighting My LACERA's major features, the video provides a step-by-step overview of everything from signing up for your account to reviewing your contributions and other pension information to updating your beneficiaries. My LACERA also offers an easy way to calculate your retirement benefits, purchase service credit online, and securely and safely send important forms and documents to LACERA.

Are you looking for specific information in a hurry? The video has distinctly marked topic sections so you can jump directly to the info you want. It also includes Closed Captioning if you need or prefer that option.

Planning for Retirement: Take Action

We are committed to providing you with relevant, timely resources throughout your career journey to help you prepare for a secure retirement. In August, we significantly revamped the Retirement Planning section of lacera.com to help you know what steps to take and when, based on where you are in your career or retirement stage.

Check out the Steps to Prepare for specific actions to take at early to mid-career, three to five years from retirement, and pending retirement (six months). Planning for retirement starts on Day One of your LACERA membership and continues until your actual retirement date, so be sure to check back regularly to make sure you are on track and progressing toward your goal.

When it is time to retire, our Ready to Retire section helps you initiate the process or self-retain, depending on your preference, with an online election form, online to-do list, repository of retirement-related forms and resources, and actions steps to take during the self-retirement process.

Visit lacera.com > Active Members > Retirement Planning to see what's new and how you can start preparing for your future today!

Streamlined Service

Our cover story in the last issue focused on how we are working hard to improve service to you, particularly in terms of speeding up wait times

when you call us. We've made great progress in that area in the last few months by optimizing our staffing resources in the Call Center and adding some helpful new call-line options.

In August, we launched the My LACERA support queue to expedite service for members needing help logging into and/or using My LACERA. When calling the main LACERA number, you can now choose a numbered prompt to be quickly connected with a specialist for help with forgotten passwords, account lockouts, trouble uploading documents, and other My LACERA technical issues. The new support queue has been an instant success, handling about 80 to 90 calls per day. Combined with the added staffing resources, we have reduced call waiting times by an average of 15 minutes!

At the end of September, we also deployed new wait-time and callback features. Now when you call LACERA, you will be provided an approximate wait time. If you decide not to hold, you can request a callback. Next we will be adding a voice authentication service to speed up the identification verification process when you call. We are also working on after-call surveys, so you can leave feedback for us about your experience.

Painless Paperwork: Helping You With Healthcare Forms

If you are preparing to retire, part of the process involves transitioning from County-provided healthcare to LACERA-administered healthcare. Filling out the paperwork accurately is a detailed process, so we created an easier way for you to confidently complete the necessary forms. You can now use our graphic-enhanced instructions and sample forms as a reference when enrolling in medical, dental/vision, or Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug plans.

We also updated the forms themselves so you can fill them out on your computer before printing them out and signing them. Once the forms are completed, they can be submitted to LACERA online, through the mail, or by using our drop-off box at our office in Pasadena. We recommend uploading the forms through My LACERA as the quickest and safest option.

To access the sample forms on lacera.com, go to Retiree Healthcare > Healthcare Resources > RHC Forms and Publications.

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LACERA ACCOMPLISHMENTS

LACERA Honored for Excellence in Financial Reporting and Professional Standards



For the 32nd 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, 2021. 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 24th consecutive year.

Last October, the Public Pension Coordinating Council (PPCC) awarded LACERA the Public Pension Standards 2022 Award, in recognition of meeting professional standards for plan funding and administration as set forth in the Public Pension Standards. LACERA is a 20-time recipient of this important award.

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

LACERA Helps Lead SACRS 2022 Fall Conference

The State Association of County Retirement Systems (SACRS) Fall Conference was held in Long Beach from November 8 to 11. SACRS was established as part of the County Employees Retirement Law of 1937 (CERL) and comprises 20 independent county retirement systems. SACRS holds two conferences per year for California pension systems to conduct peer-to-peer education, information sharing, and networking sessions.

This year, Board of Retirement Trustee **Vivian H. Gray**, SACRS President, opened the General Session and was also the presenter for the SACRS volunteer awards. LACERA trustees, executives, and staff members shared their professional expertise as conference speakers, including: Board of Investments Trustee **Gina Sanchez**, who moderated the Risk Mitigation 101 session; AEO **JJ Popowich**, who (as Chair) led the SACRS Education Committee meeting; Chief Investment Officer **Jon Grabel**, who was part of the panel on Investment Leadership Through Changing and Unpredictable Markets; Staff Counsel **Jessica Rivas**, who moderated an attorneys' breakout session; Section Head **Sylvia Botros** and Senior Retirement Benefits Specialist **Angel Calvo**, who presented on LACERA's Benefit Protection Unit; and Disability Retirement Specialist Supervisor **Tamara Caldwell**, who presented on the development of LACERA's online disability retirement application.

Thanks to everyone who represented LACERA so well at the conference!

Creating New Ways to Serve You cont'd from pg. 4

Coming Soon: Enhanced Member Services

We spent 2022 implementing new ways to improve and streamline your LACERA experience, but we're not even close to done yet! As part of ensuring that we are in touch with member needs and expectations, we have been carefully reviewing your feedback, suggestions, and wish-list items from the 2022 Member Survey (thank you for

taking part!). Your input has been absolutely vital in our strategic planning process, as we set goals and objectives for the next five years. We will be wrapping up the process by year-end or the start of 2023, and while we can't go into specifics just yet, we will be undertaking ambitious and exciting new initiatives to benefit you. Check our next issue of *PostScript* for updates.

Retiring? Leaving County service for a new adventure? Congratulations! But did you know that you can keep your assets in your 457(b) Horizons and/or 401(k) Savings Plans even after you separate from County service? Keeping your money in the Plans with Empower may provide you with better opportunities than other investment products.

Here are a few reasons why you might want to stay in the Plans:

- **Low fees:** The Plans' 100,000-plus participants help keep fees low and generally more competitively priced than retail investment accounts. The lower the fees you pay, the more money that stays in your account to help you build retirement income.
- **A wide choice of investment options:** You can build a portfolio that matches your goals. Investment options include Target Date Funds, Asset Class Funds, and the self-directed brokerage account (SDBA). The SDBA is intended for knowledgeable investors who acknowledge and understand the risks associated with the investments contained in the SDBA.
- **Convenient account management:** You can contact the County online at www.countyla.com, by phone at (800) 947-0845 or in person (appointments required) at the local Pasadena office at 300 N. Lake Avenue, Suite 210, Pasadena, CA 91101. Please call to make an appointment.
- **Local noncommissioned representatives:** Empower representatives cannot offer investment advice, but they can help you understand your choices and answer your questions about the features of your Plans.
- **Account consolidation:** You may be able to roll over eligible retirement accounts from other employers and/or IRAs into your 457(b) Horizons and/or 401(k) Savings Plan accounts. Consolidating accounts can make it easier to apply your strategy across all your assets – with fewer statements, less

paperwork, and possibly fewer fees to pay! Consider all your options and their features and fees before moving money between accounts.

- **Flexible payout options:** There are many distribution options available, including periodic payments (which you can schedule like a regular retirement paycheck), lump-sum withdrawals, partial withdrawals, or purchase an annuity contract from one of the annuity providers of the Plan. Call (800) 947-0845 to learn more about your options.

Things to consider:

- **Key disadvantages of Roth IRA rollovers upon retirement:** Roth IRA contributions are made with after-tax money, meaning that there's no tax deduction in the year of the contribution. The impact to rolling out pre-tax deferred compensation dollars, such as the ones you've contributed to your 457(b) Horizons and/or 401(k) Savings Plans to a Roth account in retirement, is that those funds become immediately subject to taxation versus taxation over a lifetime in retirement. For some individuals having taxation implemented all in the same year can significantly impact your retirement savings. Another drawback is that withdrawals of account earnings must not be made until at least five years have passed since the first Roth contribution or in this case, rollover. So bear in mind that if you move your funds to a Roth IRA, you would not be permitted to take any distributions until five years have passed from your initial deposit to the Roth. In contrast, withdrawals from your 457(b) Horizons and/or 401(k) Savings Plans are available to you upon retirement or separation from service.

Keeping your 457(b) Horizons and/or 401(k) Savings Plan accounts after you stop working for the County may be a smart part of your own plan for the future. Contact your Empower representative at (800) 947-0845.



Money from other types of plans or accounts that are rolled over into a governmental 457 plan may still be subject to the 10% federal early withdrawal penalty upon distribution from the 457 account prior to the investor reaching age 59½.

Under IRS regulations, you must receive at least the minimum amount required at your required beginning date (RBD). Your RBD is April 1 of the calendar year following the calendar year in which you reach age 72 (age 70½ for years before 2020) or leave employment with the County of Los Angeles, whichever is later. If you wait until April 1 of the calendar year following the calendar year in which you reach age 72, you

will be required to take a second distribution by December 31 of the same calendar year.

Withdrawals may be subject to ordinary income tax. Withdrawals made prior to the investor reaching age 59½ may incur a 10% early withdrawal penalty.

Withdrawals may be subject to ordinary income tax. The 10% federal early withdrawal penalty does not apply to 457 plan withdrawals except for withdrawals attributable to rollovers from another type of plan or account.

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Investing involves risk, including possible loss of principal.

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EXTRA! EXTRA! RETIREMENT HEALTHCARE INFORMATION AND NEWS

In future newsletters, you'll find a series of articles explaining how the Retiree Healthcare (RHC) program works, how to use it, and what resources are available to you and your beneficiaries.

In this new feature, you can expect an overview of the RHC program, how LACERA-administered RHC is provided, how current and future legislation could affect your benefits, and much more.

Have questions about subsidies, enrollment, waiting periods, Part B, or the different types

of plans? We will provide helpful and timely explanations to expand your RHC knowledge as you approach retirement.

Stay tuned for more helpful information. In the meantime, visit lacera.com/retiree-healthcare if you want to read up on program basics or access your healthcare plan details.



"Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you must keep moving."

- Albert Einstein



Important Reminder: Update Your Beneficiary Info

LACERA has made recent improvements to our death benefit claims process so we can get benefits to survivors faster. However, this expedited process depends on our members keeping their beneficiary information up to date.

Unfortunately, accidents and illnesses do happen. If you pass away before retirement, it's vitally important that we have your beneficiary's current address and contact information to send them a claim form. If a form is mailed out and then returned to LACERA as undeliverable, our staff must research the beneficiary's address, which slows down the payment process considerably and adds stress during what is already a difficult time for your loved ones.

Please take a few minutes to check your account and ensure that everything is in order—it will help us help your survivors! All you need to do is log in to My LACERA and click on the Beneficiaries tab. If you need to update any information, you can do it right there, quickly and easily. (Or, if you prefer, you can download or order the Beneficiary Designation Form from the lacera.com Forms & Publications page, which you can then upload, mail, fax, or submit via LACERA's onsite mail drop.)



Your Safety, Our Concern: Phishing

Keeping yourself and your information safe online has never been more important. One of the best ways to stay safe is to avoid phishing scams. Have you gotten a strange email, with misspelled words, asking for important information? You may have been the target of phishing.

Phishing is the fraudulent practice of sending emails claiming to be from reputable companies to try to get you to reveal personal information, such as passwords and credit card numbers.

How do you spot a phishing attempt? Here are some things to look for:

- **A request that asks you to confirm personal information:** If you get an email that seems authentic but is unexpected, it is a strong sign that it comes from an untrustworthy source. No reputable organization will ask you to verify or validate any information via email or over the phone. If this happens to you, it's always good practice to log directly into your account portal (such as your bank account) and ignore any links in the suspicious email.

- **Poor grammar:** Misspelled words and poor grammar are an immediate red flag of a phishing attempt.



- **High-pressure situations or messages that communicate a sense of urgency:** If a message or call seems like it was designed to make you panic and act immediately, tread carefully—this is a common maneuver among cybercriminals. You can always start a separate email thread or pick up your phone to validate the urgency of the situation if you question it.
- **Suspicious links or attachments:** If you receive an unexpected message asking you to open an unknown attachment, never do so unless you are fully certain the sender is a legitimate contact. You can always hover your mouse over the link or attachment to validate that it is coming from a safe source. Once again, you can always reach out on a separate thread to ask the sender if this is a valid communication.

Sign Up for a LACERA Webinar Today!

Preparing for your retirement can seem daunting. Luckily, LACERA is here to assist you with our benefit webinars. These interactive sessions are designed to help you make informed pre-retirement planning decisions so you can retire the way you want.

It doesn't matter if you're just starting your career, retiring soon, or somewhere in the middle. We have presentations designed to help you fully understand and make the most of your retirement plans and benefits in retirement.

We offer webinars covering a wide range of topics, many in conjunction with Empower Retirement. Subjects range from our New Hire

Orientation to overviews of your retirement and Retiree Healthcare options to timely financial webinars (like dealing with inflation risk). For a full list of available workshops and to find a date and webinar time that work for you, visit lacera.com and click on Active Members > Retirement Planning > Workshops.



Public Service Announcement

Empower Yourself: Strengthen Your Dispute Resolution Skills

Are you looking for something meaningful to do in your time off or retirement and ready to learn some valuable new skills? If you answered yes, the Los Angeles County Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA) has a great opportunity for you!

DCBA's Dispute Resolution Program (DRP) is excited to offer soon-to-be-retired and current retirees the opportunity to learn about dispute resolution. Provided by certified mediators, this training is offered by dispute resolution professionals across the County of Los Angeles.

Previous participants have used the training they received as a tool to resolve their personal disputes through improved conflict management. Participants have also learned how to diffuse conflict among others in professional settings. Once participants receive their certificate, future mediation-specific volunteer opportunities may be available.

For more information about this opportunity, please email DRPVolunteer@dcbalacounty.gov or call Maritza Gutierrez, County DRP Manager, at 213-712-5541.



Attend LACERA Board Meetings—Virtually

Did you know you can livestream LACERA Board meetings on lacera.com? Our recently upgraded Board Meetings page includes a livestream feed as well as upcoming meetings calendar and materials, archives of prior meetings, and an enhanced search feature.

Visit lacera.com/leadership/board-meetings at the time of the meeting for the livestream (please note meeting times and dates are subject to change):

- The Board of Retirement meets at 9 a.m. on the first Wednesday of each month and Thursday the following week.
- The Board of Investments meets at 9 a.m. on the second Wednesday of each month.

You can also watch previous board meetings on LACERA's YouTube channel. Go to www.youtube.com and type LACERA in the search box to access a variety of LACERA videos, including recorded meetings and retirement and benefits information.*



*Disclaimer: By visiting LACERA's YouTube account, you will leave lacera.com and be directed to an external website. LACERA does not have control of 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.

Adjusting Your Tax Withholding Elections

If you will be retiring soon, one of the forms you will complete is tax withholding for your benefit payments. (See important information about the form changes for 2023 below.) Once submitted, if you need to make a change to your tax situation, you can modify the amount deducted from your monthly benefit at any time. LACERA offers two easy ways to do so.

1. Use My LACERA to make adjustments securely online:

- Sign in to your My LACERA account.
- Select "Tax/1099-R."
- Select "Adjust Election."
- To adjust your federal tax elections, provide the appropriate information, then click "Confirm."
- To adjust your California tax elections, provide the appropriate information, then click "Confirm."

• After entering your name, click "Submit."
2. Print and mail or upload your forms to LACERA:

- Find your federal and state tax withholding forms on lacera.com. On the homepage, click the Forms & Publications tile, then find the withholding forms under "Manage Your Retirement Payments."
- Print out and complete the forms.
- Upload your forms by logging in to your My LACERA account or mail forms to:

LACERA
PO Box 7060
Pasadena, CA 91109-7060

Please note, if you do not want to change your existing election, no action is necessary.

New for 2023

Beginning in 2023, if you plan to adjust your tax withholding elections, you will now be required to submit the W-4P revised by the IRS in 2022. The redesigned W-4P introduces some changes, such as the elimination of personal allowances and a new head of household marital status. Tax credits, such as for children or education expenses, can still be

claimed on the form (assuming the payee is eligible to claim them). The redesigned form also asks payees to include income from their other jobs or retirement pensions. For more information about the redesigned W-4P, visit www.lacera.com/retirement-payments/changing-your-withholding.

LACERA does not provide tax advice. Consult with a professional advisor to determine which withholding category is best for your personal situation.

Pre-Retirement Divorce or Dissolution and Your Retirement Benefits

If you are dissolving your marriage or domestic partnership, you must contact LACERA to update your records. If your marriage or domestic partnership is dissolved while you are an active member, your LACERA pension is subject to California community property laws, which define ownership of property acquired during a marriage or registered domestic partnership. In a dissolution proceeding, the court may order a future division of

your monthly retirement allowance as well as direct you to choose a specific retirement option.

If you are in the process of a dissolution at the time of retirement, LACERA cannot pay your retirement allowance until the Judgment of Dissolution of Marriage is final and a court order directing the community property division of your LACERA benefits is received.

3 THINGS:

BLACK | HISTORY MONTH

LACERA values each member's efforts and recognizes the unique value everyone brings to our community. To highlight the rich and varied history and accomplishments of Black and African Americans, we recognize and honor February as Black History Month with three facts about this important time of commemoration.

1 Black History Month was founded by historian Carter G. Woodson, who was deeply committed to educating people about the beginnings, difficulties, and accomplishments of African Americans in American history.

2 A week in February was selected for the original celebration by Woodson in 1926. He chose February because it had the birthdays of abolitionist Frederick Douglass and President Abraham Lincoln.

3 In January and February of 1970, Black History Month was first observed by Black students and faculty members at Kent State University. For America's bicentennial in 1976, President Gerald Ford officially recognized Black History Month.

Sources: www.rd.com; www.britannica.com; www.vanderbilt.edu; www.asalh.org

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Donate to the Department of Public Social Services Toy Loan Program

The Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) promotes imagination, exploration, and discovery to children across Los Angeles through their Toy Loan program. It's a free service that allows children to borrow toys from a Toy Loan Center in the same way they borrow books from the public library. There are multiple Toy Loan programs across Los Angeles County.

Donations of new toys and books are always welcome and accepted year-round. DPSS will gladly pick up donated items from your home, office, or other location. To schedule a free pick-up or drop-off location, contact DPSS at 213-744-4344. Monetary donations are also accepted. All donations are tax-deductible.

To mail a donation, send to:
DPSS Toy Loan Program
2615 South Grand Ave., 2nd Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90007

In addition, toys and books can be donated through our AmazonSmile registry list. Visit toydrive.lacounty.gov or email toyloan@dpss.lacounty.gov for more information.



PAFR Enclosed: Our Financial Condition, at a Glance

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

The PAFR is a snapshot of LACERA's finances and accomplishments for the fiscal year 2021-2022. We encourage you to read the financial status of our pension fund and retiree healthcare fund to see how the trusts are performing. Our full Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) is available on lacera.com.



Upcoming Holidays

LACERA will be closed on:

- **Monday, December 26**
For Christmas
- **Monday, January 2**
For New Year's Day
- **Monday, January 16**
For Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- **Monday, February 20**
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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