

General Council Times

A publication of CSEA's communications teams

CSEA's 65th GC

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Issue 3 • September 2009



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30th Annual Labor Solidarity March

Monday, Sept. 7

Labor: We ARE the economy!

March: Broad & E St.,
Wilmington, Calif.

Assemble at 9 a.m.,

March at 11 a.m.

Rally: Banning Park, 1 p.m.

Schedule-at-a-glance Sunday, Sept. 6

- 6:30 a.m.: Non-Denominational Religious Service
- 7 a.m.: Voting for CSEA Officers
- 8 a.m.: Benefits Fair
- 9 a.m.: Registration, GC Reconvenes
- 6 p.m.: Film, "Home"; Single Payer Information Seminar
- 8 p.m.: Film, "Home"; Single Payer Information Seminar
- 12 p.m.: Luncheon
- 1:30 p.m.: GC Reconvenes
- 4:30 p.m.: Recess; Local 1000 Budget Break Out
- 6 p.m.: GC Labor Day Picnic Celebration

Monday, Sept. 7

- 8 a.m.: Registration
- 9 a.m.: GC Reconvenes
- 12 p.m.: Luncheon
- 1 p.m.: GC Reconvenes
- 3 p.m.: Delegate Quorum & Roll Call
- 4 p.m.: Adjournment

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Photo by Slobodan Dimitrov

Front, left to right: Yolanda Solari and Valerie Anderson. Standing, left to right: Beverly Waller-Wharton, Marilyn Ferrasci, Barbara Wilson, Noby Reidell, Neva Canfield, Merle Cale, Winnie Radov

Woman's Committee honors past Women of the Year recipients

By Linda Holderness, ACSS

Beverly Waller-Wharton, CSEA's 1985 Woman of the Year, has some strong advice for today's young women: Don't take the rights you have for granted.

"We can't lose sight of the view that there's still work to be done," she told a reporter at the Women of the Year luncheon Friday. "Your rights can be taken away easier than the struggle it took to win them. If we don't stay vigilant, we can lose."

Friday's lunch, sponsored by the CSEA Women's Committee, honored past Woman of the Year recipients. This year's awards will be presented Sunday afternoon during the GC meeting. For the first time, four women will be honored, one from each affiliate.

The committee, staffed by CSEA Legislative Representative Sherrie Golden, names a Woman of the Year at each General Council. The committee also produces the

Women's Conference in Sacramento during the spring before each GC.

The CSEA Women's Committee established the Woman of the Year award in 1980 to recognize CSEA members who make outstanding contributions to the betterment of women in CSEA, state government and the community. One year, the Woman of the Year was a man; in 2007, it was a group. All of the recipients have done CSEA proud.

Supporting the hard-won achievements for women, many of which occurred during her career, is the main reason Waller-Wharton joined the CSEA Women's Committee in 1978 and stays active at age 77. She has served as the organization's chair and vice chair. She is also a member of CSEA Retirees, Inc. and a GC delegate.

When Waller-Wharton began working at San Jose State University in 1959, the only jobs open to her were clerical.

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On sunflowers

The Women of the Year luncheon opened with a poem, "Sunflowers," written and read by Robyn Sherles, chair of the SEIU Women's Committee. Sunflowers was the theme of this year's lunch and also Sherles' favorite flower. In her poem, sunflowers became a metaphor for the strength of women in the labor movement. Serles dedicated the poem to the past Women of the Year. In part, it reads:

I am a woman
The embodiment of
empowerment passion
strength and love
and like a sunflower
I strive to rise above.

Stage is set for early morning voting



Photos by Steve Sloan

The candidates (from left): Kevin Menager, candidate for president; CSEA President Dave Hart; CSEA Sec. Treas. David Okumora; candidate for Sec. Treas. James Graston; candidate for Exec. VP Patrick Swift; CSEA Exec. VP Donna Snodgrass

Challengers and incumbents state their positions

The first major action of GC 2009 is to elect the three officers of CSEA. Three challengers have thrown their hats in the ring, going up against the incumbents. Their positions on major issues are summarized here.

President

Incumbent Dave Hart would continue the strategic plan of making CSEA a profit center and he knows when to bring someone in to focus on a particular program. He believes legislative attacks have helped unite the affiliates around common causes, and that B&P-8 served to galvanize the affiliates and neutralize the negativity surrounding internal politics.

Challenger Kevin Menager would like to have a unified vision carried out in all departments of CSEA to improve services;

he wants to increase membership to create strength and quality; he would reach out to Republicans and he advocates combining affiliates' strength on matters of common interest and less self-interest.

Vice President

Incumbent Donna Snodgrass advocates the promotion of CSEA programs to outside entities to gain greater profits and to improve

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CSEA's Governmental Affairs Office changes with the times

By Kathryn Plunkett, CSUEU

The Governmental Affairs Office has existed since the beginning of California State Employees Association (CSEA) when the committee was originally created to negotiate benefits with the legislature on behalf of state employees and retirees. But, with collective bargaining filling that need

for the rank-and-file divisions, the legislative focus naturally changed.

Now with the passage of B&P-8, the path was cleared for each affiliate to reinvent Governmental Affairs.

For you new delegates and those experienced delegates who prefer "the short story": governmental affairs is whatever

Growing pains BPP&P group adapting to the post B&P-8 world

By Ray Finnell, CSUEU

Bylaws and Policies are the guideposts by which CSEA is navigated. Following on the heels of the 2007 GC's remarkable B&P-8, most of this year's proposals are relatively tame. Indeed, nearly all resolutions before the Bylaws, Policies, Procedures, and Programs Committee are realignments of the bylaws to reflect affiliate autonomy and the metamorphosis of CSEA into a service organization that began two years ago. Exemplifying cooperativeness between affiliates, most of the proposals quickly passed through open committee hearings Thursday night and will be brought to the delegates for action with recommendations to adopt. Chair Marilyn Ferrasci praised the thoroughness and accomplishments of B&P-8, saying, "If it wasn't for cleanup language, there wouldn't be that many resolutions."

A revolutionary proposal, B&P 10/09, only required correction of one minor typo before being passed as amended and without debate. This measure is a bid to limit the number of delegates to GC, and its several predecessors at past GCs have spurred heated debate. The deal isn't done yet, though, and discussion will likely arise when it comes before the delegates. The proposal's net result would be a cut in the number of GC delegates by roughly half.

Another cost-saving measure from 2007, which put General Council meetings on a three-year cycle instead of a two-year schedule, was pitted against B&P 10/09's immediate predecessor. The former won in a trade-off for defeat of the 2007 reincarnation of the delegate-reduction bid: delegates were reluctant to slash both cost-incurring aspects of GC at the same time.

Easy passage was the word of Thursday's meeting, with 18 of the 21 proposals being sent on to the delegates with recommendations for adoption. Two exceptions to the rule emerged in that first open meeting, though, and both sparked discussion.

B&P 20/09, a proposal to investigate affiliation with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, did not pass the committee's muster for being sent to the delegates for action. The committee determined that the action this

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an individual affiliate wants it to be because they control the funding and the agenda.

Every improvement gained for the retirees and supervisors is only attained through the work of CSEA's Governmental Affairs Office, aka Sherry Golden and crew. "We're changing the focus again," said Golden,

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Night & day

By Joseph Dobzynski, Jr.



• Friday night I attended the SEIU Local 1000 concert/dance after dropping off my column and story for Saturday.

Free drink tickets were given at Affiliate Day, which, during a furlough period, is hard to pass up. I caught a quick dinner after checking in with the family, answering questions, and decompressing after a day full of information, then worked my way to the Catalina Ballroom.

The scene was somewhere between a wedding reception and high school prom, but the participants were there to have a great time. Confetti popguns, masques, necklaces, and glowsticks littered the table. A Brazilian drum corps with vocalist and dancers rocked the night for about an hour, and the party began in earnest afterward. Photos available at Facebook.

I spent the remainder of the evening dancing and hanging out with fellow delegates before turning in for the day.

• Morning comes when I'm not ready. I laid in bed waiting for the alarm to tell me I really had to wake

up, but then realized the clock had the wrong time. Note to you inexperienced travelers: always check your clock when you get to your room!

Jumped out of bed, showered, and headed to the press room. Uploaded and cross-posted photos to Facebook and distributed the newsletter to the usual locations. Headed to the poorly attended delegate orientation, which was almost a complete review from Affiliate Day.

• Sergeant-at-arms training was interesting. Pat Gantt, CSUEU President, asked me to serve as a sergeant-at-arms. I remember responding, "I'd be honored. What exactly is that?" It's not too big of a responsibility, but it does require some awareness of process and procedure. Trial by fire again. I should get a baton after hearing the stories from previous GCs. At least they pronounced my name correctly at roll call on the first attempt.

• Opening ceremonies. No better way to start General Council than taiko drumming, a Buddhist invocation, and a rousing rendition of the national anthem. Actually being the sergeant-at-arms was mostly busywork. Getting lunch orders,



handing out papers and placards, and most of all, tallying votes, although I dodged that bullet in the first day. Jim Brulte

was an odd choice for guest speaker given the audience, not so much for the political affiliation, but the focus on the existence of an organization being more important than the purpose, which seems to be a fault of both political parties. The nominee speeches brought out passionate cheering, which was good to see. In these troubled times, we don't want a selection, but an honest election with multiple viewpoints.

Another day in the life of a first-time delegate, sergeant-at-arms, and reporter.

—Joseph, GC Times Reporter



B&P ...

Continued from page 1

measure calls for doesn't fall under the CSEA's bylaws, policies, procedures, or programs and therefore should not be presented to GC. Vice Chair J.W. Jimenez stated, "That would be up to the affiliates. This is not properly before the entire body." Though a small measure of dissent arose from audience members, the committee unanimously rejected the proposal from consideration by the full delegation.

In contrast, B&P 21/09 was highly controversial. The proposal was to specifically identify one of CSEA's purposes as representing retirees' interests in securing pension, health, dental, vision and burial benefits in conjunction with the affiliates. Committee members' opinions were summarized by Jimenez: "Each affiliate has agreements to advocate for its members' benefits. This is more appropriate for the Retirees, Inc. affiliate to handle." The difference between affiliates' responsibilities to their members and CSEA's obligations as a service-provider to the affiliates became the crux of the ensuing argument.

Passionate opinions came from several audience members. "Only half of the family receives advocacy from CSEA," said Sam Jurado, one of the proposal's initiators. A new slackening of support for all members, as opposed to the past achievements of CSEA, was cited as the circumstance that sparked this proposal. Another speaker from the floor observed a weakening of the Retirees, Inc. affiliate, and argued that the proposal would make up for lost ground on the advocacy front.

Anne Green, CSEA legal counsel, was called on for an opinion. The proposal is "contrary to autonomous representation agreed to in 2007," she stated. Chief Counsel Rocco Paternoster agreed: "Autonomy means the affiliates decide what action CSEA pursues."

Committee member Olin King made the point that CSEA fully supports retirees. The committee pointed out that B&P2/09 proposes striking Art. II.1.(b), which man-

dates CSEA advocacy for wages, hours, working conditions and retirement benefits for members. Jurado conceded that B&P 21/09 was conceived in part to bolster advocacy for retirees with regards to the current language of II.1.(b), and that without II.1.(b), his proposal's strength would be diminished.

Chair Marilyn Ferrasci summed up the committee's position by saying, "I was one who didn't believe in the affiliates' autonomy [in the past]. Things have changed now, though. Affiliates know what they want; CSEA is a service organization." The committee voted to refer the proposal to the Retirees, Inc. affiliate.

At that point, hearings were ended, or so everyone thought. After a day's hiatus, though, word spread that B&P would reconvene Saturday morning. Three items were on the agenda.

The first two, taken out of numerical order, were both referred to CSEA's Board of Directors after committee members deemed them inappropriate for delegate action. B&P 23/09 proposes that CSEA request CalPERS to reinstate an Ombudsman Program. The matter was originally approved by the board and sent to B&P; the committee bounced it back to the board, saying it is a policy issue and GC doesn't deal with policy.

Similar action was taken on B&P24/09, which advocates maintenance and ensurance of women's rights in the future. Jimenez expressed the committee's solid support for the intent of the measure, but he stated their obligation to refer it to the board and he urged a recommendation to adopt it.

Principal proponent Natalie Bremer presented the case in favor: "I would like this resolution passed to recognize and commemorate the hard-fought struggles that women have had at the workplace and that I take for granted today." Pat Gantt added, "It's a reaffirmation of support in CSEA and the affiliates for women in the labor and equal rights movements. Similar proposals have been before CSEA since 1979 and we need to approve it at this GC."

Heartfelt support came from several other speakers on the floor. The committee's action was to refer it to the Board for study and appropriate action.

The last order of the day was a hot-button issue that the Fiscal Committee addressed Friday as FIS 2/09 and referred to B&P. In its new incarnation as FIS 22/09, it was the subject of intense and, at times, emotional, debate. The matter proposes "that CSEA reaffirm its commitment to funding and paying the health benefits of existing staff retirees and their dependents." Committee member Bob Wilson opened debate by stating that the matter would be more appropriately handled by the Board of Directors or in negotiations with staff members' bargaining representatives.

Proponent Jim Milbradt pointed out that retirees' health benefits, as opposed to pensions, will not be shifted to SEIU International and therefore could be subject to decreased support. He countered Wilson's stance, saying that "Retirees don't get to negotiate."

Debate continued for some time, and was similar to that carried out before the Fiscal Committee and reported in Saturday's edition of GC Times.

New arguments were raised, including questions about UAW's perceived lack of involvement and how action could be better taken via the affiliates' representatives who sit on the CSEA Board. Finally, the matter was once again referred out of committee: its next stop will be with the Board of Directors.

Ferrasci also expressed praise for how well the Board functions, during a separate interview. "Congratulations on how you have worked together," she said. "The delegates need to know you are a team."

Many of the items up for action can be directly linked to the five-day October Revolution of 2007 and they tie up loose ends from that historic GC. The resolutions that B&P has sent to this delegation will be brought to the floor Sunday and/or Monday.

Lobbyist shares views for GC's keynote address

With a talk titled "Why Is the Legislature So Dysfunctional," Republican lobbyist Jim Brulte opened CSEA's 2009 General Council yesterday afternoon as keynote speaker.

A former state assemblyman (1990-96) and senator (1996-2004) who's the only freshman to ever serve as a party leader in both houses of the California state legislature, he brought plenty of insider expertise to the topic.

Declaring early on that he didn't give a damn if anyone disagreed with him, he clearly was playing to the conservative side of the house, saving his most acerbic barbs for those (presumably liberal) audience members who took issue with him.

The Democratic and Republican parties today are more ideological than ever, he declared, a trend that began in 1964. Until then, they were both rather mainstream in their views, but today they're typified by strong, sometimes extreme stands to which just about everyone in the respective party agrees.

Those in the moderate center are more likely to decline to state their party affiliation, and today the battle is for such ideologically centrist



Photo by Steve Sloan
Republican lobbyist Jim Brulte

voters, who tend to be younger and to dislike both parties.

Factors increasing partisanship and gridlock in Sacramento, he averred, include term limits and the method of selecting Republican and Democratic nominees, a process that is limited only to those of that party's affiliation instead of being open to all voters.

At this point, the partisanship at the Capitol is so strong that lobbyists must always have separate messages for Republicans and Democrats. This is colored by the fact that districts tend to be rather solidly red or blue to begin with due to demographic dynamics.

Against this backdrop, Brulte's suggested rules of the road for organizations seeking to influence Sacramento are:

- Successful organizations focus on public opinion
- Nothing ensures that organizations will remain successful
- As public opinion shifts, organizations need to react
- True believers can love an organization to death, particularly those at the extreme ends of the political spectrum

The state's revenue problems will continue for the foreseeable future, he added, meaning that the challenges of working with legislators on budget-related issues will only intensify in the fiscal years to come.

During his tenure in state office, Brulte focused his efforts on crime reduction, reforming the workers' compensation system, and reforming the welfare system, among other causes.

He joined California Strategies in 2004 as a partner and heads the Inland Empire office, the region where he grew up and later represented in the legislature. California Strategies is a public affairs consulting firm dedicated to navigating clients through California's political, legislative, regulatory, and media environments.

Candidates ...

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shared benefits. She believes the state is the cause of the state budget problems and the public needs to know that the "furlough solution" will compound the situation; she also wants to set the record straight with the public on the misperception of state employees.

Challenger Patrick Swift would increase marketing of CSEA services to others and make more benefits available to our members; he wants

'Govt. affairs' ...

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a thirty-year veteran leading the charge at the Capitol. "My job is to service the affiliates and work closely with the individual legislative committees' goals."

CSEA President Dave Hart agrees that the future goal is to move legislative programs to be affiliate-based. "Right now, we have a sort-of ad-hoc program. This has made us re-examine our role in working with the individual affiliates," he said.

Women ...

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At the time, women couldn't get credit on their own or buy houses, and it hadn't been many years that married women could even work at some agencies. Waller-Wharton retired in 1995 as the editor of the university catalog. In between, her university department established a women's studies program and she got involved in such issues as opening up nontraditional jobs to women and paying equal wages for equal work.

Waller-Wharton praised the positive changes she has seen in her career, but, she insisted, "we still have a way to go. Child care workers, for instance, do not get paid as much as somebody who takes care of chickens." Then she quickly adds, "And we still don't have a woman president."

Retirement hasn't slowed her down or lessened her dedication to CSEA. She has been president of Retirees Chapter 23, in the Santa Clara area, since 1996.

Noby Reidell didn't slow down

to improve services and increase accountability to all affiliates. He would work with lawmakers to resolve the furlough situation; he'd like to see CSEA lead the way for others on health care and pensions.

Secretary-Treasurer

Incumbent David Okumura advocates continuing the shift toward a paperless system to save physical and financial resources; he feels honored to have been part of the paradigm shift towards cooperation among the affiliates. He believes all persons should be treated with

"Autonomy has changed our needs and the Board of Directors has not decided on a model. We're not quite there, yet. We cannot go back to the old way of doing business, but on common issues, we definitely want to work together."

Golden added: "Each affiliate needs to be recognized for its own needs with its own message. Where I used to 'drive the engine' of the organization's legislative programs, you could say that I'm now driving the caboose to push

respect and dignity; and stresses accountability at all levels.

Challenger James Graston has audited major corporations and believes this work experience has prepared him for the secretary-treasurer position; he's not surprised that the governor used furloughs in addressing the budget gap, and believes that establishing positive relationships could have avoided furloughs. He also believes CSEA would most benefit from working with moderates in the legislature.

the affiliates' individual legislative goals through. We advocate against those things that are detrimental to us like furlough, two-tiered retirement, attempts to change health care plans from defined benefit to defined contribution, and pension reforms," she said.

Jim Hard of Local 1000 agrees that it's a natural progression for the affiliates to be working through. "CSEA is well on the way to changing the structure to meet current conditions," Hard concluded.

she is still active as a Veterans of Foreign Wars auxiliary president and with the Friends of the Fair.

If the past Women of the Year appreciate the continuing success of women in the workplace, the younger committee members are finding inspiration from the older ones.

"They have become mentors," says 40-year-old Natalia Bremer, the committee's youngest member. "I've learned not to take the privileges and opportunities for granted that we have today."

And, echoing Beverly Waller-Wharton, she adds: "We've come a long way, but I think in some ways we still have a long way to go."

The members of the 2008-2009 CSEA Women's Committee are Char Gonzalez of SEIU; Evelyn McKenna and Elena Yuasa of ACSS; Natalia Bremer and Nancy Kobata of CSUEU; and Marianna Bauske and Beverly Waller-Wharton of CSEA Retirees, Inc. Sherrie Golden of CSEA is the assigned staff, and Donna Snodgrass, CSEA vice president, is the assigned officer.