

General Council Times

A publication of CSEA's communications teams

CSEA's 65th GC

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Pre-GC • September 2009



Now GC has its own TV show! Watch 'GC Today' in your room each morning on Channel 18, starting on Saturday.

Schedule-at-a-glance

Thursday, Sept. 3

- 1 p.m.: CSEA BOD
- 2 p.m.: Nominations Committee
- 3 p.m.: Resolutions, Rules committees
- 3:30 p.m.: BPP&P, Member Benefits committees
- 6 p.m.: Past Presidents Dinner; BPP&P Committee
- 7 p.m.: Local 1000 Sgt-at-Arms Dinner

Friday, Sept. 4

- 8 a.m.: Registration; BPP&P, Fiscal, Member Benefits committees
- 9:30 a.m.: Rules Committee
- 10 a.m.: Affiliate Day
- 6 p.m.: BPP&P Committee
- 8 p.m.: Local 1000 Celebration
- 8:30 p.m.: Film, "Milk"

Saturday, Sept. 5

- 8 a.m.: Registration; Benefits Fair; Tellers Orientation; BPP&P, Fiscal, Member Benefits committees
- 8:30 a.m.: Credentials Committee Orientation
- 9 a.m.: Delegate Orientation; various workshops
- 10:30 a.m.: GC Sgt.-at-Arms Orientation; various workshops
- 11 a.m.: Women of the Year Luncheon
- 1 p.m.: GC Opening Ceremonies
- 6 p.m.: Recess
- 7 p.m.: Hospitality Suites
- 7:30 p.m.: CSUEU Dinner

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

Got news? Call

415.310.3823

How we doin'? B&P-8 two years on Radical bylaws changes by 2007 delegates shapes CSEA's future

Delegates who were at General Council in 2007 will recall passing a series of resolutions—Bylaws, Policies, Procedures and Programs Resolution #8—which set the CSEA on a new and hopeful direction.

B&P8, as we came to call it, was at first drafted by the Committee on the Future of CSEA in the spring of 2007. The committee was composed of the officers of CSEA and the elected leaders of the four affiliates.

It was a hard working group. It's no secret, though, that it was not always a completely happy group. There was a lot of history and a lot of baggage in the room, leading in turn to a few raised voices and a few slammed doors.

But the members of the Committee on the Future of CSEA did what they set out to do, setting a new course that has allowed the organization to survive, and even grow.

The Committee's report was consolidated into one resolution, B&P 8.

According to its preamble B&P8 created "a streamlined and more cohesive CSEA including autonomous and coordinated political action, smoother rollovers of members between affiliates, a more cooperative CSEA committee appointment procedure, clarification of dispute resolution options, clearly defined employee-employer roles, and a new CSEA business model providing for growth and financial security."

B&P8 reshaped the bylaws to affirm the autonomy of each affiliate, with the power to run its own programs, to control its own political and representational activities, finances, and staff.

But those were words on paper. It remained for the '07 GC delegates to turn them into reality, adopting B&P8 by a better than the required two-thirds majority. And through the elected affiliate leaders on the CSEA Board of Directors, and the three CSEA officers, we moved forward on the initiatives called for in B&P8, in both letter and spirit.

The CSEA Board of Directors began that work soon after 2007 GC with a series of informal off-site Board of Directors' meetings. Those meetings helped develop an atmosphere of trust and shared commitment which allowed the board to put away

the conflicts of the past and move forward.

Early on the board showed its commitment to the spirit of B&P 8 by making the investments needed to modernize the print shop, the membership data base and accounting platform.

But perhaps the board's biggest achievement, since the passage of B&P 8, was the development of a strategic

plan. The plan sets three large goals, translating B&P into reality by:

- Improving customer service.
- Increasing the use of CSEA services by the affiliates.
- Attracting other public employee organizations to use CSEA services.

The devil, of course, is in the details. With these large goals in mind, and guided

by a first-ever CSEA customer service survey, CSEA officers and staff worked out very specific objectives and activities. These included, for example, reducing the turnaround time on check requests and expense reimbursements to ten days or less, improved marketing of member benefits, and dramatically increasing the share of

See "CSEA's future" on page 2

Effort to grow CSEA begins

VP Snodgrass takes 'Stone Soup' show on the road



CSEA VP Donna Snodgrass presents her recruitment project to the CSEA Board of Directors, June 6, in San Jose

To increase service, CSEA has launched an effort to bring public employee unions together in what has been dubbed the "Stone Soup" Project.

The "Stone Soup" Project is based on the classic tale of three travelers and how they were able to get starving villagers to come out of their hiding places to collectively create a pot of soup large enough to feed them all.

"The idea is to pool member benefits packages offered by each union," said CSEA VP Donna Snodgrass, who is leading the effort. "This drives down prices for everything from discounted entertainment tickets and travel packages, to life, travel and auto insurance."

Several public employee associations are now in the process of joining CSEA as "Special Members." This allows those members to purchase member benefits services and products available through CSEA, and, at the same time, expands the benefits available to current CSEA members.

The Stone Soup Project is based on ideas first raised by the CSEA Committee on the Future before the last GC in 2007. A bylaw change approved as part of the B&P-8 package by over two-thirds of the delegates allows for the new, limited membership in CSEA by members of other public employee groups.

The stone soup project is a vital element in fulfilling the mandate of B&P 8, according to CSEA President Dave Hart. "It share the experience and ability of CSEA Member Benefits with others to everyone's mutual benefit. It opens doors for us.

"It also has the potential to reduce the cost of the benefits we provide, and allow us to return substantial revenue to the affiliates."

"I expected a lukewarm reception, at best, but I have been stunned by how eager everyone has been to partner with us!" Snodgrass said. "With the economy down," she continued, "now, more

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New to GC: Sat. morning workshops

Veterans of GC's past were probably planning to sleep in on Saturday morning. Now there is good reason to get out of bed. Four Saturday morning workshops are designed to entertain and educate on such topics as union activism, Prop. 8, the state

budget process, and retirement planning.

The CSEA Human and Civil Rights Committee presents two programs, starting at 9 a.m. with The Labor Activist: Making the Connection Between Workplace & Human Rights. CSUEU VP of Representation

Russell Kilday-Hicks leads a presentation and discussion on ways to become involved in the labor movement. This event takes place in Santa Monica B on the third floor.

At 10:30 a.m., the Human and Civil

See "Sat. morning" on page 2

CSEA/GC 101

By Ray Finnell, CSUEU

As you arrive at the Los Angeles Westin Bonaventure for the California State Employee Association's 65th General Council (GC), take a look around: you will see more than 1000 other delegates, who, like yourself, are here because they believe they can make a difference.

We will make decisions during the next few days that we passionately believe are the best for the most. We will disagree, we will concur, we will each do and say what we think is prudent and wise. Right or wrong, we will act, but we may not know how our actions fit within the framework that governs GC activities.

Many of us know how CSEA and our particular affiliates are structured and how they operate, but some of us are a bit shaky on that information. For new delegates, and for experienced delegates who want a refresher course, here's an overview of the Association's organizational scheme and the operating principles of GC.

CSEA has a 77-year history. Started in 1931 (after a number of years of organizing by the founders) to create a public-service

retirement system (CalPERS, now one of the largest in the world), CSEA is made up of four affiliate organizations, each separately incorporated: the Association of California State Supervisors (ACSS), with about 6,000 members; CSEA Retirees, Inc., with about 30,000 members; California State University Employees Union (CSUEU), representing approximately 16,000 employees (about 10,600 of whom are members); and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1000, representing about 90,000 state employees (about 60,000 of whom are members). In total, some 140,000 people belong to the four affiliates and all are members of CSEA. (CSUEU is also SEIU Local 2579.)

Since CSEA's modest beginnings in 1931, its role has slowly evolved to where we are today—and continues to change with the times. Today CSEA is the organization's services and administrative provider. All four affiliates purchase services from CSEA and provide governance input. This is where you, the GC delegate, come in.

During CSEA's history, GC has met 64

See "GC 101" on page 2

What is this rag?

Where did the "GC Times" come from, you might be wondering? In 2005, in an atmosphere very much infused with the spirit of non-cooperation, I had the crazy idea of producing a daily publication at General Council to serve all the delegates. It would be a cooperative effort—because there just wasn't enough of that going around at the time. CSEA needed one publication for all of us.

I approached each division for assistance, and while the idea seemed to get support, the reality was each group already had their own plans for communicating with their own, apart from the rest. So, with the support of my leaders, we did it anyway. That year, a rag-tag group of volunteers produced three issues—and the "GC Times" tradition was born. At the last GC in 2007, we produced another four issues, the first, like this one, was a pre-issue handed out as delegates registered.

As you can see, at this GC we are doing it once again, but this time it's different. It's still a crazy project (I had about six hours total sleep at GC-2007), but the original vision has finally come to pass. The "GC Times" is now an effort of all the affiliate communications teams, not to mention the entire conference. Yea! It really is a new day for CSEA! Enjoy your GC and your "GC Times" (and call me with news or views! 415-310-3823).

In solidarity, Russell Kilday-Hicks, "GC Times" editor

The baritone of General Council

By Trinda Lundholm

You can hear Gus Lease whistling or singing down the halls of San Jose State University, where he has taught music and history for nearly 60 years.

"That's how they know I'm on my way," Lease says with a laugh.

That enthusiasm, not to mention his beautiful baritone voice, has made him a favorite at CSEA General Council conventions since the mid-1970s when he was the first person asked to sing the national anthem at the convention.

Whether he sings the "Star-spangled Banner," or "America, The Beautiful," Lease invariably receives standing ovations for his acapella performances.

"Music is sound, an expression of the human race, whether it be rock, hip hop, jazz, swing," Lease says. "Music is very important in the lives of people. It may be in a department store, the dentist's office or driving in a car. You just can't avoid it. It can inspire you or make you feel sad. It has even made people want to go to war."

At 86, Lease continues to teach as an adjunct professor at San Jose State and he serves as president for the Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society. He has graced 59 commencements and 59 homecomings with his voice.

During his tenure at the college,

he has chaired the music department, started the first glee club and choral ensemble and "broke a lot of ice" with musical firsts. In 1961, he produced the university's first Broadway musical—"Kiss Me, Kate."

"People waited outside and carried me on their shoulders. It was a great night," Lease recalls.

It was in sixth grade that Lease saw his first musical production when his school principal offered him third-row, center-and-front tickets to see "Hansel and Gretel" at the Orpheum Theater in Sioux City, Iowa.

"I saw that production and I said, 'That's what I'm going to do someday,'" Lease recalls.

At 14, he sang at his junior high school teacher's church and began taking voice lessons.

At 15, he was hired at the Unitarian Church, where he made \$2 at every service. Several other church stints followed. "That paid for my voice lessons," Lease said.

In 1939 at the age of 16, Lease rode in a freight train caboose to get to Los Angeles, where he finagled an appearance on the Don Lee Television Network, the first television network.

"When I was 18, I had opportunities to go on Broadway, but my mom said, 'No, you're going to college.' I've never regretted going

to college, and I've never regretted teaching all of those wonderful students. I have also had a professional life on the side. Sure, I'm not an Elvis Presley, but ..."

Lease first joined CSEA after winning a grievance for a professor. For nearly 30 years, he has held the position of director for CSEA's Region VII.

For 17 years, Lease headed "The Gus Lease Show" under the auspices of the Armed Forces Entertainment Branch, bringing musical entertainment shows to service people in the eight Western states, the Orient and Europe.

"You reach people," Lease said. "Let me tell you, if you can entertain service people, you can entertain anyone ... We would entertain on flatbed trucks. We forged a stream in Korea. We were in demilitarized zones when infiltrators came in from North Korea ..."

Lease and his performers did solos and duets, even occasional dance numbers.

In Germany, after a performance of "Once Upon a Time," Lease recalls a soldier with tears in his eyes asked about how he could get a copy of the song.

"He must have lost a loved one," Lease said. "The lyrics went, 'The world was sweeter than we knew ... Once upon a time we sat beneath the willow tree. Once upon a time will never come again.'"

Having the ability to emotion-

ally move people, as well as oneself, is one of many rewards Lease has garnered from singing. He has performed at hundreds of funerals and weddings and many conventions.

Lois, Lease's wife of 49 years, has sung and played the piano at many events with her husband. The

Leases live in San Jose and have three children, four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

They encourage everyone to sing—whether they think they can or not.

"I think retirees should sing a lot because it can bring them out of depression they may suffer at

times," Lease says. "I tell people that if they can't sing, whistle. If they can't whistle, get a harmonica and blow on it. It's bound to lift your spirits."

Gus will sing for GC in Saturday's opening ceremony.

CSEA's future shaped by B&P-8...



Photo by Steve Sloan

The voting on B&P-8 at GC in 2007 provided more than enough votes to pass into CSEA history.

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shop revenue from outside the four affiliates.

It also has included a complete remaking of the membership database, the first new accounting software in 15 years, and the visionary project to sell CSEA member benefits to other employee organizations.

The strategic plan is "a living document," according to CSEA President Dave Hart. "It's not perfect; it's going to change as we

go forward. We're constantly monitoring implementation. Where we succeed, we'll raise the bar. Where

It all goes back to the willingness of the 2007 delegates to take a leap of faith.

we fall short, we'll find out why, and make the corrections we need.

"But it all goes back to the willingness of the 2007 General Council delegates to take a leap of faith. It could only be implemented once we agreed to put history aside, and realize how many interests we have in common, and commit to building a stronger organization for the members.

"With all that in place, we can take the spirit of B&P as far as we want to."



Photo by Steve Sloan

Gus Lease (right) believes everyone should sing, whether he or she can carry a tune or not.

'Stone Soup' ...

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than ever, it is important for us to find better ways to serve our members."

Each organization brings their benefits to the pool. "For example," Snodgrass explains, "the San Bernardino Public Employees Association offers them park tickets for SoCal residents for less than CSEA can offer them. So now CSEA affiliate members can use them too."

Snodgrass has also talked to the San Luis Obispo County Employees Association (SLOCEA). "They have a local discount program that will be offered to

all CSEA members traveling to, or living in, that area," she said. "Restaurants, hardware stores, and hotels have agreed to reduce their prices for SLOCEA members and these discounts will be extended to CSEA members. Another added benefit as the program grows is that "the larger the purchasing pool becomes, the lower our prices will be," she adds.

For some it may seem an odd time to grow, given the current economic hard times. But Snodgrass says it makes sense. "Crisis can be trials or opportunities. We need to grow to survive and thrive. I feel I'm doing what I was elected to do," she said.

mid-career state employees as well as those ready to retire soon.

The California Budget Mess, taking place in Santa Monica A at both 9 and 10:30 a.m., provides an overview of this year's difficult state budget cycle, peppered with historical perspective and views on needed systemic change. Moderator Lenny Goldberg, executive director of the California Tax Reform Association, is a leading advocate for reform of Proposition 13. A member of the board of Citizens for Tax Justice, he has been involved with energy, consumer, housing, and human service issues and has published widely on tax policy.

So never you mind catching up on your z's. Get on down to the third floor and expand yourself.

CSEA/GC 101 ...

Continued from page 1

times previously to this meeting. In between meetings the authority and responsibility for most issues

is transferred to a board of directors, and day-to-day operations are handled by a general manager, who works closely with the elected CSEA president. (In addition, each of the four affiliates has its own elected executive board, led by an affiliate president.)

The major duties of the GC delegates at this conference will be to elect CSEA's statewide officers, pass a multi-year budget that will be in effect until the next GC in 2012 (including affiliate budgets that are in accord with the CSEA budget), and consider proposed changes to the Association's Bylaws and Policy File, the two governing documents for CSEA.

CSEA's board of directors is, in part, the association's leadership. In charge of day-to-day governance are three officers who will be elected by the delegates to this GC: president, vice president, and secretary-treasurer. The vice president and secretary-treasurer are responsible to the president; all three are responsible ultimately to the board.

Only the president's position is funded for 100 percent release time paid by CSEA. The other 12 members of the board are elected at the affiliate level and include the division director/president and two deputies from each affiliate. The board, then, consists of 15 members and its balance of power is achieved through equal representation of the four affiliates in the division director/president and deputies' seats, plus the eligibility of any member in good standing to run for the other three at-large elected offices. All 15 carry equal-value votes on governance actions.

As a delegate to this GC, you

are part of a body of more than 1000 who represent their fellow members. Each chapter/DLC is entitled to one delegate regardless of its number of members (not the number of represented employees).

Each chapter/DLC that has in excess of 100 members is entitled to one delegate for the greater part of each additional 100 members (51 or more). So a chapter/DLC with 150 members is entitled to only one delegate, while a chapter/DLC with 351 members is entitled to four delegates. Affiliate presidents and other officers are eligible to vote as delegates as well. At this GC, the current representation ratio will be considered. A motion to increase the number of each chapter/DLC's members for each delegate may come up for voting.

"Precisely what does CSEA do?" is a question newcomers may ask. Generally, CSEA is a service-provider for the four affiliates. The organization's functions are classified into eight categories:

- Program Review and Policy Development
- General Administration
- Legal Services
- Communications
- Governmental Relations
- Administrative Services
- Printing Services
- Member Benefits

In addition, at GC, CSEA traditionally bestows honors and recognition to deserving individuals for service to the organization.

Paid staff who execute day-to-day tasks in these endeavors are under the general leadership of the president. The general director (staff position) is responsible to the president for supervision of all operations. For particular programs, the vice president and secretary-treasurer hold administrative authority as well.

While CSEA is incorporated under not-for-profit status, two de-

partments are mandated to operate in black ink territory: the Member Benefits department (via insurance marketing and other services) and the Printing Services (from free-market sales). Both have been generating income for at least the past two years.

This year's GC delegates will exercise their direct governance of the association by voting on a number of motions which affect By-Laws and Policy files (designated by the "B&P" prefix), Fiscal affairs (FIS), and Benefits (BEN). Each of these areas has a Committee (with equal representation from each affiliate), which can bring items to the floor for action. We may also see items from the Legislative, Human and Civil Rights,

and Women's committees.

You will likely find GC 2009 strenuous and exhilarating. Rest up, exercise when you can, and eat for health. The grassroots governing authority over CSEA from within each affiliate is entrusted to GC delegates. The decisions we make will determine to a large extent how the organization will navigate the next three years, how resilient we will be, how much influence we will have over our financial and political future, and the range and strength of the affiliates' advocacy on behalf of their members.

Remember that your responsibility is to represent your fellow affiliate members to the best of your ability. An extra would be to enjoy the experience as well.

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