

General Council Times

A publication of CSEA's communications teams

CSEA's 65th GC

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(See more about social networking in the related story below on this page.)

Schedule-at-a-glance 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

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Affiliates work among themselves

Each affiliate spends day working on programs and preparation

Brief reports from each affiliate.

Local 1000

At Local 1000 Day, members focused on the Real Time Strategic Change process that they are undertaking to reinvent and reshape their union.

Several speakers including economist Manual Pastor, SEIU International President Andy Stern and Maria Elena Durazo—head of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor—outlined the unprecedented economic and political challenges facing Local

1000 and all of organized labor.

Members concluded their day by joining Local 1000 President Yvonne Walker in making personal commitments to advance four of the union's Real Time Strategic Change goals:

- Engaging more members to take action
- Providing real representation to protect jobs, wages, and health care and retirement benefits
- Building political power in the Capitol
- Being more relevant to members in both their professional and personal lives

CSEA Retirees, Inc.

While other affiliates held Affiliate Days Friday, CSEA Retirees, Inc. held its 3rd Delegate Assembly of CSEA Retirees, Inc., with nearly 300 delegates attending.

Many retiree delegates commented that this 65th General Council has a refreshing atmosphere of cooperation and hope. They welcomed guest speakers such as Yvonne Walker, president of SEIU Local 1000 and Pat Gantt, CSUEU president.

Both Walker and Gantt stressed the importance of CSEA's four affiliates working

together in this tumultuous fiscal climate when the governor, legislators, and public employee detractors are mounting consistent attacks on the pensions and benefits we have earned.

Staff showed the delegates an eight-minute member-recruitment tape, which focused on the many accomplishments CSEA Retirees, Inc., has achieved in the legislature over the years and outlined the many reasons why incoming retirees should join the ranks of our 29,000 members.

With our new political action committee, CSEA Retirees are able to support those who support us. While the four CSEA affiliates may still come together through CMAC on statewide interests, such as statewide propositions, the retirees' PAC and board can make its own decisions on issues and candidates of particular interest to retirees only.

Retiree delegates passed Resolution 6/09, which allows beneficiary members to petition the CSEA Retirees Board of Directors to become active members and hold chapter office with the exception of chapter president or vice president. These

See "Affiliates take a day" on page 2

Battalion of badges brought to order



Photo by Steve Sloan

SEIU Local 1000 staffers Dina Gentry (left) and Sarah McGinn (right) arrange name badges prior to the SEIU Local 1000 Sergeant-at-Arms dinner Thursday.

Traversing 'the maze'

Getting around the Bonaventure has its challenges

By Joseph Dobzynski, CSUEU

Perhaps the most exciting part about attending any convention is getting acquainted with the location. I'm someone who likes to get lost when arriving somewhere. There's something about turning a corner and discovering a new store or restaurant to help orient myself. I spent Thursday afternoon getting acquainted with the Westin Bonaventure, its many establishments and the surrounding neighborhood. While the hotel is quite beautiful, it can be a maze.

The Westin Bonaventure is situated on a hill, which accounts

It is always nice to have company when you are lost.

for some of the confusion. The first floor comes out at the bottom of the hill. The second floor comes out at the top of the hill. The car garage is located in the basement. Most people enter the hotel from one of these three points of entry, which ends up being an "anchor" for getting around the hotel and makes it difficult to give directions to other people.

The hotel also has six floors of accommodations, restaurants, shops, bars and ballrooms to peruse located around the outer perimeter of the lobby area. The lofty atmosphere makes a beautiful

See "the maze" on page 2

Stay more connected to your union with networking tools

By Steve Sloan, CSUEU

There is a new way people are talking and connecting to their social groups. People are having group conversations that do not require they be in the same space. You are now able to be constantly connected to all your friends, everywhere, all the time.

Tools like Twitter and Facebook belong to a class of emerging technologies called social networking.

Social networking tools do not require e-mail or even a computer and they do not use a conventional telephone.

To understand how social networking is different, with these

tools, think about how groups gather. Social groups are organized based on common interests, experiences, and/or common beliefs. Within these social groups conversations happen, values emerge and ideas are born and tested. A union is a social group of people organized around common beliefs, ideas, and principles.

Social networking tools like Twitter and Facebook are free tools that we can use to empower our unions.

There are over 250 million people on Facebook and over 6 million people on Twitter, according to Wikipedia, and the numbers

See "Connect" on page 2

Money matters CSEA facing fiscal challenges

By Ray Finnell, CSUEU

The Fiscal Committee met in open session Friday morning and addressed only two items. FIS 1/09, the budget proposal for the next three years, will be submitted to GC delegates with a recommendation to adopt; it is supported by CSEA President Dave Hart. For this action, at least, there was little discussion and no controversy. However, FIS 2/09 spurred considerable debate and no small amount of contentious advocacy.

FIS 2/09's intent is to have the delegates show support for retired CSEA staff benefits at a level equal to that of retired state employees, according to the measure's principal proponent, state and staff retiree Nobuko Reidell. An amendment was offered to reword the Resolved clause to: "RESOLVED, (a) that CSEA affirms its commitment to funding and paying the health benefits of existing staff retirees and their dependents." Reidell said. "The allocation is already in the budget; we're just asking that the delegates support staff retirees."

Early in the discussion, Chair David Okumura set the tone for the committee's position by saying he thought the matter would be more appropriately addressed by the Budget, Policy, Procedures and Programs Committee.

CSEA General Manager Lee King explained that CSEA currently has an unfunded liability for retirees' health benefits totaling \$38 million. Seventy percent of that amount relates to current retirees; the remaining balance relates to current active staff. A higher level of pre-funding future needs via an investment portfolio has been studied but is not feasible in the current economic climate, King said. "CSEA isn't insulated from what's going on in the rest of the world." He and CSEA President Dave Hart, interviewed outside the meeting,

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Dazed and confused at GC

By Joseph Dobzynski, Jr.



CSEA General Council. Allow me to introduce myself.

I'm Joseph Dobzynski, Jr. I am president of CSUEU Chapter 324, representing Bargaining Units 2, 5, 7 and 9 for CSU Channel Islands. I got involved with the union about two years ago to fulfill the activist part of my soul, but also to help my fellow employees get through the day.

I have served as Bargaining Unit 9 Representative and began attending the CSUEU Board of Directors meetings working with the Bargaining Unit 9 Council.

My passion has been tempered by learning about policy files, organizations, affiliations, and everything else that's involved in organizing, financing, and representing the organization. Over the past few years I have gotten to know the CSUEU structure pretty well, but nothing prepared me for

my first General Council.

About two months ago I started receiving packets of information in the mail. I had started opening them and trying to read over the material, including delegate information, policy file recommendations, reports and resolutions, and a myriad of other last minute notes. After a while I just started a stack at home, waiting until I had a chance to sort them out (below left photo). I packed everything into my laptop bag before leaving and headed to GC.

I spent about an hour working through the envelopes and papers. Looking at the "after" photo, the upper right pile was chapter material I brought in case we had any free time. The middle right pile, reference material. The lower right pile was all the delegate material. The lower left item is our collective bargaining agreement. The upper left pile is the wasted or



Before (left) and after (right) delegate packets.

duplicate papers—endorsements, advertisements, replaced agendas, and other items that do not seem to have a purpose. Once I had sorted everything, I realized most of this paper will probably end up sitting on the pile of other union documents at home.

Registration was a breeze on Thursday, but I could see the lines getting backed up on Friday morning. I am sure you remember getting your picture taken, which is the last thing I wanted to do after walking from Union Station. I got an affiliate bag with more stuff, including the binder for the delegate materials. I went back upstairs to put together my binder, trying somehow to sort through the rubber-banded and paper-clipped materials that were mailed earlier. I wonder why the delegate material was sent ahead of time, which we also received by e-mail in some cases. The postage costs must have been enormous.



'the maze' ...

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interior, but add a complicated elevator and escalator system and it becomes really difficult to get around. It makes the penalty for going the wrong way higher, since you may end up having to walk around the perimeter a few times to find the right staircase, escalator, or elevator.

The delegate packets included an insert entitled "The Details" which provides a wealth of information about the hotel and convention center. It is worth diving into your binders to find it. Here are excerpts from a section called "Getting Around The Hotel":

- All Tower elevators (Red, Yellow, Green, and Blue) travel to Levels 1, 3, 5 and 10-32. In other words, you can get almost anywhere on any elevator (except the ADA elevator which only travels from the Lobby through Level 6).

- You can travel from the Garage Level to the Lobby and 2nd Levels by a special elevator. Or you may take the escalator from the Garage Level up to each of the first six levels.

- The 2nd, 4th & 6th floors are only accessible by escalator or on

the ADA elevator, near the Green Tower, adjacent to the Hotel Registration area.

- To reach the L.A. Prime Restaurant on the 35th floor, take the Red Tower elevator.

- To reach the California Ballroom (Level 2), where the GC floor sessions take place, and the Plaza Pool Deck (Level 4), for Friday lunch, Sunday lunch and dinner, take an escalator from the Lobby, or take an elevator to the 3rd or 5th floor and use the escalators or stairs to get to your destination. Again, the ADA elevator travels to level 2 as well.

Are you humming the Hokey Pokey after reading that section? Or perhaps you think it reads like stereo instructions. Many delegates had this lost look on their face as they roamed the balconies and rode the elevators, hoping they will find the right path to get where they need to go.

Here are some better tips:

- Leave early before your meetings. If you end up arriving early, it'll give you more time to read the General Council Times.

- Travel in pairs. Two heads are better than one when trying to figure out where you are, and it is always nice to have company when

you are lost.

- Ask for assistance. CSEA staff will have black badge holders and will point you in the right direction. Hotel staff can also guide you to where you need to go.

- Use the escalators or stairs for the lobby floors. You don't want to get into an elevator to find out you can't get to the right floor. The escalators move between all the lower floors. The ADA elevator is available as needed.

- Use the elevators to get to your room. It's the only way to get up there.

With those tips you will eventually get where you want to go.

And then there are the other hotels.

The money ...

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emphasized that "no discussions about eliminating retirees' benefits or pensions are taking place." In addition to the unfunded \$38 million, there's an additional, funded liability of \$40 million which covers retirees' pensions.

King added that the current liability for health care alone per retiree ranges from about \$550 to about \$700 per month; the total monthly expenditure, including pension costs, comes to between \$1,650 and \$1,800 per retiree. The pension expense will decrease over the next few years, when it will be shifted to SEIU International under a recent agreement. King speculates that concern over the security of retirees' benefits may have sprung from this change, although no major change of pension payments will result from that shift.

"We don't want to provide anything less than what state workers get," Hart reiterated. The challenge, King added, "is to figure out how to better use our resources and treat people fairly." Hart's strategy includes a major effort to improve efficiency in CSEA operations, including a program to update technology. He is guiding staff toward better customer service to the affiliates while striving for greater efficiency.

Ultimately, committee members voted to refer the matter to B&P.

I'm not even sure after our Affiliate Day program that I have everything in the right place within the binder, but as Michael Brandt, CSUEU Bargaining Unit 7 Vice-Chair, told me, "as long as you can find it when you need it, it's in the right place."

My favorite part is meeting new people and hanging out with old friends. The Westin Bonaventure has great venues for getting together. I ran into some of my fellow CSUEU Board members and we caught up on the latest news

from their campuses. It's great to see that we can get together and hang out. It is one thing to do the work and get organized, but it is just as important to spend time with your fellow activists. And we are all activists in our own ways being a part of CSEA.

I was also pulled into the GC Times room to get a bit more organized on my tasks for the newsletter you are reading. This column will run for the remaining issues and you can follow me in real time in two

locations. On Twitter at <http://twitter.com/gctimes> and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/generalcounciltimes. We have also set up an e-mail address to send comments and photos to: generalcounciltimes@gmail.com. I will post them to the Facebook account. Join us on our Facebook account. If you see me around and have a good story, or want to pass along comments, flag me down! Look for the hat!

—Joseph, GC Times Reporter

Which hotel tonight?

Hotel SNAFU doesn't dampen can-do spirit

By Linda Holderness

To paraphrase poet Robert Burns, the best-laid plans don't always work out. Take, for example, our confirmed GC room reservations at the Westin Bonaventure.

A week before GC was to begin, the coordinators learned that many of the rooms were no longer available because of renovations. Nearly 300 staff and delegates were being displaced.

CSEA staff members Janis Mickel-Szichak, Karen Jensen, Gloria Andrade, and Lois Fong rushed to Los Angeles on Saturday to resolve the problem. "We wanted to make the best of a situation that was beyond any of our control or the hotel's control," Mickel-Szichak, CSEA director of organizational development, said.

By all accounts, they did. The group first set up priorities. Of primary importance was to get all delegates into the Bonaventure. Alternate delegates had second priority

and staff third. Some delegates and most staff were dispersed among the nearby Sheraton, Wilshire Grand, and Marriott.

With exceptional cooperation from four hotels, everyone was placed. Unfortunately, some had to hotel hop before getting settled.

The Bonaventure agreed to open its restaurants at night and set up kiosks with low-cost snacks just for CSEA, Mickel-Szichak said.

To make transportation to the Bonaventure safe and easy, CSEA has rented a van and contracted with local driver Jim Pelham to run the hotel circuit continuously in the mornings and evenings. The van is dark blue with printed "GC shuttle" signs taped on the windows. Rides are free. See the schedule to right.

"All's well that ends well," another poet wrote. Mickel-Szichak said: "Fires can't stop us, hurricanes can't stop us. A little SNAFU with the hotel can't stop us. We're going to design our future."

GC shuttle makes hotel trips easy and safe

The General Council shuttle makes the full trip every 15 or 20 minutes to pick up and drop off delegates, guests, and staff to three GC hotels (the Marriott is an easy walk from the Bonaventure). The exact times will depend on traffic and wait times.

Pickup spots: The South Figueroa Street entrance at the Bonaventure; the Hope Street entrance at the Sheraton; the 930 Wilshire Boulevard entrance at the Wilshire Grand.

Pickup times—Saturday: 7-11 a.m. and 6-7:30 p.m.; Sunday: 6-9:30 a.m. and 4:30-9:30 p.m.; and Monday, morning only, 7-10 a.m.

Affiliates take a day for themselves ...



Photo by Slobodan Dimitrov

CSUEU President Pat Gantt addresses SEIU Local 1000 delegates on Affiliate Day

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beneficiary members cannot hold any association office.

ACSS

ACSS spent its affiliate day completing the first step of a long-range strategic planning process. Led by Sacramento consultant Eric Douglas, president and CEO of Leading Resources Inc., a change-management firm, about 80 ACSS members broke into groups to brainstorm the organization's future, at both chapter and headquarters levels, and share their ideas with the full gathering.

The suggestions were specific and imaginative, including improving customer service to create more enthusiasm from prospective members, increasing our presence at the Capitol, training supervisors to help them advance in their careers, creating member-interest subgroups, restoring the 10 percent differential between supervisors

and rank-and-file and lobbying to institute overtime compensation for supervisors.

Suggestions for improving chapter meeting attendance included stepped-up marketing to potential members, bringing in guest speakers, and creating Webinars for chapters with widely dispersed populations.

The day wrapped up with a short board meeting and a meeting of the ACSS Political Action Committee.

CSUEU

A stimulating game of Delegate Jeopardy and an invigorating lesson on how to assemble the GC binder served as bookends holding up the more serious lessons on how to operate effectively as a GC delegate, CSEA President Dave Hart's presentation on the CSEA Strategic Plan, a summary of resolutions on which we will vote, and other subjects during CSUEU's Affiliate Day activities. The state university

system's 90 or so delegates also heard presentations to orient them to GC procedures and an overview of CSUEU's proposed budget and how it works within CSEA's budget.

Two special guests were introduced by CSUEU President Pat Gantt and contributed to the day's activities. SEIU Local 1000 President Yvonne Walker extended goodwill to the CSU delegation, and Dave Hart delivered a thorough view of problem areas in CSEA when he took office in 2007.

He explained how strategies to solve the problems were developed and reported on the plans' progress. Hart stressed that openness and trust are the bywords of the Board, and that a middle-of-the-road philosophy has emerged, mixing hands-off governance and micro management.

A staff-developed game of Jeopardy with labor history and contract categories rounded out the day's events for CSUEU delegates.

Connect ...

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are growing fast!

Facebook and Twitter are more than fancy e-mail. These technologies do not replace e-mail or traditional Web sites, they supplement and extend those technologies.

If e-mail replaced traditional postal mail you can think of these technologies as replacing the community centers, pubs, coffee houses and other places people go to connect and socialize. Like it or not; now there is no need for people to go to places to congregate. Thanks to social networking tools, people are already and always able to be virtually congregated in social groups connected through their social network tools and devices.

Almost everybody has some sort of way to plug into social networks like Facebook and Twitter. The technology is being built into phones. Any phone that can

get a text message can subscribe to Twitter.

Twitter is a virtual place, like a Web site, where people can post a series of messages of small size, 140 characters or less, and anybody can typically subscribe to these messages. The subscriber chooses whom she/he wants to subscribe to.

Like Twitter, Facebook also is a virtual place, but with capability to store much bigger messages, photos and/or video. The author in Facebook can choose who he/she wants to invite to view her/his content.

The messages in both of these services can be accessed in devices as simple as a text message enabled cell phone. It is so simple a child can do it. In fact, they are doing it.

This technology offers a great way for union members to stay connected to each other and to organize new members. See the left column on the front for directions how to connect to GC networks.