

Family incomes drowning in soaring health costs

For the third year in a row, we are facing double-digit increases in our healthcare costs. Kaiser is going up 16% in 2005 and Blue Shield is increasing by a staggering 24%. In dollar figures that means the following: on the Kaiser plan, the cost for an individual will be \$354.69, for two \$709.38 and for a family of three or more, \$922.19. With Blue Shield's plan, an individual will pay \$389.96, two will be \$779.92 and three or more a whopping \$1013.90.

Compare these rates with what you paid three years ago, and you won't need a calculator to see that the healthcare giants are gouging us. In fact, according to District figures supplied by Harry Joel, district Vice-Chancellor for Human Resources and Employee Relations, in the past five years Kaiser's prices have gone up by 92.7% and Blue Shield's by 111%!

Health costs eating up economy

The skyrocketing cost of health care is a major national issue, crimp-



ing job growth, reducing family incomes, slowing consumer spending and adding to the millions of uninsured. Most employers have dealt

with these huge increases by engaging in "cost-shifting", requiring workers to pay higher contributions and co-payments or by limiting their choices of insurance plans.

In our district, we have experienced both methods of cost-cutting, as PERS, our healthcare umbrella provider, has cut back its choices of providers and the district cap on benefits has not kept up with the severe increases in costs. However, even with these band-aid solutions, "past cost-shifting has done little to solve the underlying problems driving up the price of healthcare", according to Blaine Bos, a health-care consultant quoted in the *L.A. Times*. Bos continues, "If you get into an environment where you have double-digit inflation year after year after

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PRESIDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

Negotiations in full swing as money items pitched

by Katharine Harer and Joaquin Rivera,
AFT 1493 Co-Presidents



Welcome to the new semester: new faces, new challenges, and a maze of new construction projects on all three campuses. The AFT started the semester with a retreat and a Giants' baseball game. If you were in attendance at either or both, we hope you enjoyed the chance to spend quality time with one another. Over 40 district employees with their families and friends attended the pre-Labor Day baseball game on September 3rd.

District offers state COLA

Your negotiating team has been busy since mid-summer playing tennis with the district. So far, there's no score, but we are looking at a host of proposals which we shared with you in the email newsletter we sent out during the first week of classes. Since that communique, the district has made their first monetary offer: a multi-year agreement attached to the state COLA, not to exceed 3% and not to go below 1% for each year of the contract. *Multi-year* can mean any-

thing from three to five years, according to the district's chief negotiator, Lee Finney. Our response was simply no. We would like to see a salary increase that goes beyond COLA, taking other factors into account, such as our standing in the Bay 10 and the true cost of living in the Bay Area. On September 21st we will meet with the AFT Executive Committee at our monthly membership meeting to discuss a counter monetary proposal.

The district has given us some
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**San Mateo Community College
Federation of Teachers
AFT Local 1493, AFL-CIO**
1700 W. Hillsdale Blvd.
San Mateo, CA 94402
(650) 574-6491
aft1493.org

Editor
Eric Brenner, Skyline, x 4177

Editorial Board
Eric Brenner, Skyline, x 4177
Dan Kaplan, x 6491

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Joaquin Rivera, Skyline, x 4159

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Sandi Raeber, CSM, x6665

Chief Grievance Officer
John Kirk, CSM, x 6386

Executive Secretary
Dan Kaplan, x 6491
kaplan@smccd.net

PRESIDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

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salary comparison data to look at and our chief negotiator, Joaquin Rivera, has done some further research to establish numbers that are as precise as possible. At this point, both AFT and the district agree that our salaries are most inequitable (7th or 8th out of the Bay 10 districts, depending on whose numbers you use) when you look at **Column 8** on the salary schedule (M.A. + 60 units) — which is where **almost half** of our faculty are placed.

AFT meets with Counselors

The AFT held a meeting with counseling faculty on September 7th at Skyline. Over fifteen counselors from all three campuses attended and responded to the district's various contract proposals that would seriously impact counseling faculty. The group unanimously rejected the district's proposal to change the counseling work year to a fiscal year rather than the academic year which all faculty currently work. Counselors spoke about the lack of respect they felt underlying the district's proposal to change their work year and about how disruptive it would be to move from an academic year to a fiscal year. The counselors expressed that they feel like second-class citizens and that they want to be treated like faculty members.

The participants at the meeting felt that the two biggest issues impacting their ability to provide services to students were: 1) the need to hire more full-time counselors to fill lost positions; 2) the need to improve management of student flow and of part-time counselors in order to manage peak times and slow times with more efficiency. It was suggested that administrators should work more closely with counseling faculty to design solutions to problems rather than foisting changes on them from the contract level. Finally, there was agreement that all of the counselors are

putting in the maximum effort to provide quality counseling services and these issues must be dealt with if high caliber services are to be maintained in the district.

We will be inviting representative counselors to attend a bargaining session in the near future in order to clarify the issues and to answer questions from the district team. Since the Counseling Task Force hit a wall last year, there has been a need to re-address these issues.

Along these same lines, we invited two librarians, Eric Brenner and Tim Karas, to speak to the district negotiating team about librarians' issues. The tenor of the discussion was very good and we feel hopeful that there may be some movement in looking at working conditions for our library staff.

Returning once more to the issue of health care, Proposition 72 on the November 2 ballot is a critically important initiative that will protect health care coverage for working families in California who can't afford it. Read more about Proposition 72 on page 5 of this issue. Inform yourselves and vote!

**Order your
"Educator's
Income Tax Guide"
now**

"The Educator's Income Tax Guide" is the tax guide that educators have relied upon for 38 years. It tells the inside story on how the tax law changes and rulings in 2004 will affect you. If you are interested in a copy, please call the AFT office (x6491) by Friday, October 1, to place your order. The more faculty who buy a copy, the less the cost will be. (e.g., if 4 faculty purchase the Guide, the cost is \$9.95 each, plus shipping and handling. But if 9 faculty purchase the Guide, the cost is \$7.00 plus shipping and handling.)



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

A QUESTION TO ALL FACULTY:

Are you paying too much for medical benefits? Should health coverage and salaries be increased an equal amount? Or should there be more money put into one or the other?

We would like to hear from a wide range of faculty on this issue so please respond and let us know what you think by either calling the AFT Office at x6491 or by e-mailing us at: kaplan@smccd.net

YOUR RESPONSES

Part timers' views on equalization of paychecks

In the last Advocate, we asked part-time faculty members to tell us what they think about the equalization of paychecks as implemented by the District. The following are two responses we received to our "What do you think?" question.

I want to thank you very much again for your advice about what to say to EDD (*Advocate*, May 2004) by following which I qualified for Unemployment without any problem at all!

In the May 2004 issue of the *Advocate*, the question was asked of part-time faculty whether they are happy with the equalization of paychecks as implemented by the District.

My answer is that I am not at all happy with it. While I would strongly favor the **true** equalization of paychecks during every month of the semester, the current system gives you much less in the first and last months, which is precisely when you need the money the most (i.e., just after and just before the semester breaks). In my opinion, even the old system of being paid for the hours you actually work is preferable to the current system, because then you receive about the same amount or more than you do now in the first

AFT 1493

Executive Committee/ Membership Meetings

Get involved in your union and keep up with the latest developments. AFT 1493 E.C./General membership meetings are open to all faculty. Upcoming meetings:

**Tuesday, September 21
2:15 pm
CSM, Bldg. 1, Room 115**

**Wednesday, October 27
2:15 pm
Cañada, room t.b.a.**

month and definitely more than you do now in the last month.

If the District refuses to implement true equalization, I personally would prefer to opt out of the present system, which the Union or the District should allow faculty to do.

Steve Gruen, CSM

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Equalization of paychecks – I don't care. But reduced medical benefits for part timers - I went from about \$400 a semester to about \$150!! – When you are poor - you get only major medical and 1/4 of my policy is only about \$150 a semester so go back to a set amount each semester. I would like to see national AFT lobby against the Govt. Pension Offset, which currently means that one cannot get earned Social Security and STRS benefits - thus I cannot afford to retire and there are no medical benefits for part timers! Barbara Boxer is working on this Pension Offset (or so she says) but AFT could lobby all of Congress and Senate and get this unfair pension plan changed. Thanks.

A Skyline part-timer

Ed. note: *The AFT and CFT have been lobbying against the Govt. Pension Offset as the writer has requested.*

PART TIMERS' EVENTS

AFT Workshops for part timer activists October 8 & 9

Part-time community college faculty leaders, activists and members:

You are invited to attend a **negotiations training workshop**

When: Friday, October 8, 2004
3:30 p.m.—9:00 p.m.

Where: San Jose City College (Technology Building, 4th Floor)
2100 Moorpark Avenue, San Jose, CA

If you want to understand how and why negotiations work—or don't work—this day is for you. Direct presentations, discussions, small group exercises, and Q. and A. opportunities will be included. What do you need to know before you go to the table? What constitutes strong protections for part-time faculty members?

Union 101: activating part-timers, union rights and resources

When: Saturday, October 9, 2004
9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

Where: San Jose City College (Technology Building, 4th Floor)
2100 Moorpark Avenue, San Jose

Believe it or not, part-timers have rights. Build your knowledge of your employee rights.

Do a handful of people do all the union work in your local? Find out what successes other locals have had and what experienced CFT staff recommend.

What resources are available to us from the CFT and AFT? How can our affiliates increase our local union's effectiveness?

If you are interested in attending either the Friday or Saturday programs, or both, please call the AFT office (x6491) asap. The registration deadline is Wednesday, September 29.

Skyrocketing health costs

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year, essentially both the employer and the employees are having to share a bigger and bigger burden, and that burden at some point can break your back."

The Advocate asked Harry Joel a few questions about the health care crisis and its implications for our district. We are concerned about regional pricing, whereby PERS is going to start charging less for healthcare in Southern California than in our half of the state. Joel explained it this way: "Salaries of health care providers are higher in Northern California, therefore hospital charges are higher and physicians charges are higher. Couple that with fuel costs and claims experience and this causes the differential in premiums. Regional pricing is not new for other insurers and there is nothing illegal to challenge the methodology of regional rates. Auto insurance companies calculate premiums by zip code."

One idea that has been suggested by the district at the bargaining table is to implement a "cafeteria plan" in our district. In Joel's view: "A cafeteria plan offers an employee the ability to pick and choose benefits that meet the individual's needs. Employees could decide which benefits they would elect and waive others. A single 25 year old may not be interested in large amounts of life insurance, but a married employee with three children may be interested in as much life insurance as is provided. I see no cons to a cafeteria plan, but it does require employees to carefully think about benefits choice and selections." The AFT will continue to investigate the up and the down sides of this radically different approach to benefits, and we will give you more information as we get it.

Healthcare taskforce will explore options

The only real solution to remedy the greed and mismanagement of health care in this country, in our opinion, is a universal, single-payer healthcare system, but in the meantime we must address the problems that face us. The AFT is working with the district to look for a reasonable and fair way to deal with these draconian increases. We've decided to form a healthcare task force with representatives from all three unions, AFT, CSEA and AFSCME, working with district human resources staff and a healthcare broker in order to explore options. One possible solution is to get out of PERS, but it is too late to do that this year, and we need to be sure that any short-term benefits of leaving PERS won't be just that — *short-term*, leaving us in a worse position over the long haul. Another solution is to group with other community college districts, thus increasing our numbers of subscribers and attracting lower rates. The problem here is that most of our faculty are no longer, shall we say "young", and this demographic holds true for most other districts as well. Healthcare providers know that the "no-longer-young" have more health issues and they will accordingly charge more. There are other options for the taskforce to explore, but it isn't realistic to assume that any

LETTER TO THE ADVOCATE

End our two-tiered system for retiree medical benefits

Probably very few District faculty are aware that if hired on or after September 8, 1993, they must have 20 years of full-time service in order to get medical benefits from the SMCCCD when they retire (see Article 10.1.5 of the AFT contract—online at <http://aft1493.org/contract.html>). Faculty hired before 9-8-93 only need 10 full-time years to qualify for the benefits.

In both instances, the so-called magic number of 75 comes into play: age plus service years must equal 75. This rule, however, is really beside the point for employees who, for instance, do not become full-time until their forties. This means they must work until their sixties to get the health benefits. In addition, the District currently does not take into account part-time work with regard to the service requirement. By the way, this situation affects all employees, not just faculty. For classified staff, the corresponding date for the two-tiered system is July 1, 1992 (CSEA contract, Article 9.4.2).

We propose the following:

- Treat all employees the same, regardless of date of hire; i.e., make 10 years the requirement for everyone.
- Count part-time service toward the 10 years.

Jim Bowsher & Tom Hewitt, Skyline

major changes will take place immediately. The goal of the taskforce is to make recommendations that can be implemented on January 1, 2006. Thus, we are left with looming price hikes in benefits combined with the ongoing need to raise salaries during yet another lean budget year.

Salaries vs. benefits

During the contract forums we held last semester, there were substantive discussions about where to put the money, into salaries or benefits or both — stretching funds over both needy areas. While most people seemed to feel that we need to address increases in benefits, a good argument was made for putting the bulk of the money into salaries so that people could choose for themselves what to do with it. Additionally, single folks who pay less for health care would not be docked. Please let us know what you think about this. See the "What do you think?" question on page 3.

Part timers' health benefits underfunded

The issue of part-time benefits is being discussed at the bargaining table as well. We recently moved from a fixed stipend to a percentage reimbursement — up to 50% of an instructor's premiums — and we are looking at how this is

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Vote Yes on Proposition 72: Protect health care coverage for working families who can't afford it

Health care insurance costs are spiraling out of control. One in six Americans are without health care coverage, including over 6 million Californians. Premium cost increases are affecting the finances of schools, and snarling collective bargaining. Corporations are forcing unions out on strike over reductions in or outright elimination of health care coverage. Ultimately we need a single-payer health care system, like Canada's, to solve the problems created in this country by for-profit health care insurance companies.

Last year, however, California took a big step in the direction of extending health care coverage to working families who can't afford it. The Legislature and former Governor Davis passed SB 2, the "Health Insurance Act of 2003," which extended health care coverage to one million Californians through their workplaces.

The latest attack on our right to health care is the

Encourage your students to register & vote; Get materials from Associated Students

The Associated Students offices on all three campuses in the District have voter registration forms now available for those students and staff who are not yet registered to vote, and want to do so. Please drop by your Associated Students office to pick up the form ASAP, as the registration deadline for the November 2 election is fast approaching. Faculty who would like to obtain quantities of the registration form for distribution to their classes should also make their request immediately to the Associated Students office at their college. Encourage your students to register and vote!

Health care costs

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working for our part-time faculty compared with the previous payment type. With either method, it's not enough money, a token amount in terms of an individual's total cost, complicated by the fact that the state doesn't have enough money to fully reimburse the district as the amount in the state fund is insufficient to cover all the districts that are applying for reimbursement.

These issues and more will be discussed at the forums we will hold later this semester to get your feedback on the new contract. We look forward to seeing you there. We value your input on these serious decisions that affect not just our pocketbooks but the quality of our lives.

state Chamber of Commerce's effort to repeal the landmark SB 2. This opponent of the Health Insurance Act has already spent an estimated \$3 million to qualify **Proposition 72** for the November ballot, and is expected to raise upwards of \$15 million dollars for its deceitful media campaign. You would normally expect a proposition to repeal a law to require a "No" vote. But knowing that voters tend to vote "No" if they are unclear about a ballot measure, the opponents of SB 2 worded their proposition so that saving SB 2 requires a "Yes" vote. Expect an exceptionally deceptive campaign by the other side.

You can be a part of the ongoing effort to achieve affordable health care coverage for all. Health care is a right, not a privilege. Vote **Yes on Proposition 72** on November 2.

For more information, go to the Yes on 72 campaign website at: yesonprop72.com

Volunteer for election phone banking and precinct walking

The November 2 election is just around the corner. Among other things, we need to support Proposition 72 to protect employer paid healthcare so that taxpayers won't have to support irresponsible employers.

AFT Local 1493 is urging faculty to participate in the San Mateo County Central Labor Council phone banking and other activities like precinct walking, stuffing envelopes, delivering lawn signs, or calling volunteers.

The San Mateo Labor Council will begin phoning registered voters on Monday, September 20th in Burlingame and precinct walks will begin Saturday, October 2 in Foster City. Call the Labor Council at 650-572-8848 to sign up or if you have questions or a special request. Call the AFT office (x6491) if you need directions to the phone banks or the precinct walks.

Every evening a nice dinner is always served before the work begins!

Pocket calendars, anyone?

Have you recently received in your campus mailbox (or at the Opening Day program) your new 2004-2005 California Federation of Teachers pocket calendar? If not, we still have a few calendars left! If you would like one, please call the AFT office (x6491) ASAP and we will send you one.

Daughter of Skyline's Cal Robinson wins two union scholarship awards

Kristin Robinson, daughter of Skyline business professor Cal Robinson, received two union scholarships after graduating from Carlmont High School last spring. She received a \$3000 Raoul Teilhet scholarship from the California Federation of Teachers and she also received a \$1,000 AFL-CIO Union Plus scholarship award. The CFT scholarship fund was named after long-time CFT leader Raoul Teilhet (who served the organization as president from 1968-1985.) The Union Plus program awarded \$150,000 in scholarships to 106 students from 38 AFL-CIO unions.

Kristin is entering Stanford University this fall after maintaining a 4.45 GPA in high school and ranking in the top 1 percent of her class. Robinson plans to attend Stanford University and major in mathematics. "I expect to work in the mathematics or engineering field, with my ultimate goal to teach math at the high school or college level," she explained, adding, "I believe I can influence the learning ability of others by showing understanding and passion." This form of giving back, she says, relates to what she has learned from her father and from his union. "My relationship with the union and labor movement is largely through my father, and I am familiar with some of the help he has received from the organization."

Cal described his feelings about his daughter's honors: "Her mother and I are very proud of Kristin's accomplishments and grateful for the opportunities that AFT provides for union members. In addition to working hard, Kristin has learned that people from all walks of life can sometimes benefit from a helping hand. Her old man received help from his union; Kristin spends hours each week serving her community and tutoring. I'm amazed she has time to socialize...but she manages to do that, as well. Kristin will make a first-class educator."

For the latest faculty news and information, check out AFT 1493's award winning website:

aft1493.org

For statewide faculty news, go to the California Federation of Teachers website at:

cft.org

Changes in labor's foreign policy views evident at numerous union conventions

by Dan Kaplan, AFT 1493 Executive Secretary

Developments at union conventions held over the summer suggest that a new wind is blowing throughout the U.S. labor movement as union delegates consider what kind of foreign policy best represents the interests of working people in this country.

At the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Convention, held in July in Washington, D.C. there was a large and well-organized presence and activity of a broad anti-war group within the union. The anti-war grouping was able to achieve an open and extended debate on the war and occupation of Iraq and over 400 delegates attended an anti-war forum organized at the convention.

Also in July, the 25th Biennial California State AFL-CIO Convention handed a stunning rebuke to national-level foreign policy leaders of the AFL-CIO. By a unanimous decision, over 400 representatives of the state's almost 2.5 million organized workers adopted a resolution called "Build Unity and Trust Among Workers Worldwide." Several earlier resolutions, including one sent by our own local and another from the California Federation of Teachers were blended by the Resolutions Committee to create the "Build Unity and Trust" resolution. This resolution condemned the AFL-CIO's relationship with the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), pointing out that NED "has a dubious history, having been employed frequently to promote U.S. government foreign policy objectives, including assisting in overthrowing democratically elected governments and interfering in the internal affairs of the labor movements of other countries."

The California Federation of Labor Convention also passed a resolution against the war in Iraq and urged "an immediate end to the U.S. occupation," and decided to explore affiliation with U.S. Labor Against War (USLAW), a growing national organization.

The drama of a well-organized and articulate anti-war voice that was heard at the California AFL-CIO convention and at the national AFT Convention was repeated at virtually every labor union convention that was held in the U.S. this past summer, including SEIU, AFSCME, and the National Postal Mail Handlers Union. In each case, this anti-war work was assisted and supported by USLAW. These developments indicate that the U.S. labor movement is on the verge of articulating a new understanding of what a just U.S. foreign policy would look like.

Contingent faculty continue to build a national movement for equity at Chicago conference

by Joe Berry, COCAL VI Organizing Committee Chair
& former AFT 1493 Executive Secretary

Over 200 people, contingent faculty activists and their allies, assembled August 6-8 in Chicago at Roosevelt University and Columbia College for the sixth Conference on Contingent Academic Labor (COCAL VI), a network of North American non-tenured higher education labor activists. For the first time, the conference included a significant delegation from Mexico as well as participants from throughout Canada, including Quebec, and all over the United States. Besides

the heavier international participation, one of the contrasts between COCAL VI and earlier conferences was the much more extensive focus on strategy. This included a series of three workshops on local, national/international and whole-society vision strategic strategies, as well as plenary panels where national faculty union leaders and leaders of other

organizations of contingent workers were asked to put forward their strategic perspectives. Another addition to previous conferences were a series of pre-and-post conference activities that included a mural tour, a Haymarket Labor History tour and a trip to the Second City comedy club.

It should be noted that COCAL VI was only possible because it built upon the achievements of the previous COCALs, back to 1996, in Washington, NYC, Boston, San Jose, and Montreal. It was their efforts that drew together a truly binational movement network that could then engage in the discussion and activities that were COCAL VI.

For many people, the highlight of the first day was the march through downtown Chicago where a "Progressive Report Card" was presented to five of the local institutions that employ large numbers of contingent faculty. With final grades ranging from C+ to F, the Report Cards made clear that while unionization clearly improves the situation, general standards remain low and many faculty are

still working in truly intolerable situations. The march dramatized for many visitors how important it is to have a large enough percentage of contingent faculty organized in order to really push up area standards to something resembling what exists in highly organized areas such as California.

In addition to the three strategy workshops there were also three workshops on campus organizing and three on contract bargaining, all of which attracted large attendance. Additional workshops focused on such issues as contingent advocacy in professional associations, the experience of graduate employee unions, discrimination on the job and in



COCAL VI attendees march through downtown Chicago to protests at several colleges

the movement, recent job actions, and legislative and political initiatives. Particularly provocative for those who attended was a workshop on teaching for equity: promoting justice for contingent workers in the classroom, where participants discussed the techniques for effectively "coming out of the closet" as a contingent to one's students, risks involved, and the value of collective support in doing so.

A reception was held in which awards were given out in the memory of Dave Wakefield and Jim Prickett, two movement activists from the California Community Colleges who died prematurely. The awards, given to Rodger Scott of San Francisco and Margaret Quan of Contra Costa Community College District honored two recent retirees for their lifelong contributions to the cause of contingent faculty, particularly in the California Community Colleges where organized struggle has been going on since the mid-1970s. These awards represented the first time that COCAL has consciously recognized its own history and begun the process of honoring its own ancestors.

The conference held a closing plenary at which it heard some strategic reports and made plans for future activities, such as the continuing success of Campus Equity Week. An advisory committee of over twenty then met to debrief and evaluate the conference and officially encourage our colleagues in Vancouver and the Pacific Northwest to follow through on their tentative initiative to hold COCAL VII there in 2006.

Take us out to the ballgame

Over 40 AFT 1493ers and their families and friends enjoyed a balmy evening and an exciting game at the Giants' "Union Night" at SBC Park on Friday, September 3rd. Some scenes of AFTers at Union Night are shown below.

