



T R E N D

(Thinking Retired Employees Need Direction)
Retired Employees of Kern County

Volume MMXV-IV

JULY & AUGUST 2015

www.reokc.org

Phil Franey, President

M. L. Bennett, Editor (mlbennett36@sbcglobal.net)



President's Message Phil Franey

Our mission is to promote the education and earned benefits of all retirees of Kern County, advocate the safeguarding and continuation of Kern County retiree pension and health benefits, provide avenues of support and information for Kern County retirees and beneficiaries, ensure proper and necessary representation on the Kern County Board of Retirement, and participate as an integral contributor in our Kern County communities quality of life.

As prepared by Ginger Mello, REOKC Secretary, the following is from the minutes of our April luncheon:

1st Vice-President Nancy Warnick introduced Victoria Theriault from the Friends of the Baker Street Library who announced there will be a big 100th birthday celebration for the library on May 9, 2015 from 12 noon to 3 p.m. Nancy Warnick introduced Ann Cervantes who is the Community/Political Organizer for SEIU Local 521. Ann spoke on the attempt by the Kern County Board of Supervisors on privatizing the Kern County Library System. She invited REOKC members to attend the Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday, April 28, 2015 to speak against privatization of the Library system. Nancy Warnick then introduced **Katie Claborn** from the Kern County District Attorney's Office speaking on **Elder Abuse**. Katie stated there are only 7 Advocates and 1 Director of the Elder Abuse Unit at the DA's Office. They receive all the reports from the Bakersfield Police and the Kern County Sheriff's Department. Katie stated her telephone number is **661-868-7617** and urged everyone to call if you feel you know someone who is being abused. She also announced the DA's Office has just opened the Family Violence Matters Unit to be directed by Melissa Allen.

Based on the previous paragraph, I think that my comments on the 2014 June luncheon are still very timely. I discussed a very informative program presented by

Gordon Isen (661-868-1656) who, among his many duties, heads the real estate fraud unit in the District Attorney's Office. His program titled "DON'T BE A VICTIM" discussed not being a victim of fraud or a scam.

Your REOKC Board of Directors recently approved our scholarship recipients for this year. We awarded two \$750 scholarships to selected high school seniors. The REOKC scholarships winners will be announced at our August meeting. The REOKC Board of Directors is looking at upgrading our scholarship program and seeking new avenues in supporting our community.

As I mentioned in the last TREND, every day our retirees and their families unselfishly volunteer their time and effort for community projects and causes. Many retirees and spouses have volunteered their time at the information desk in the Kern County Administrative Building lobby on Truxtun Avenue. We also thank all of our retirees and families who volunteer for many other organizations in our and other communities.

When you look at my Board of Retirement report in this TREND, you will be able to again read excerpts from last year's letter that was sent to the KCERA Board to request an increase in the Supplemental Retiree Benefit Reserve (SRBR) benefits. The request was to the Board of Retirement to perform its fiduciary duty and apply the unallocated vested SRBR funds to increase retiree and member benefits. This letter was signed by representatives of bargaining units and REOKC to demonstrate the need for action. Effective January of this year, the death benefit has been increased from \$3,000 to \$5,000. The remaining availability of unallocated vested SRBR funds is under study for consideration and possible approval of future benefits by the KCERA Board.

The Board of Supervisors' ongoing attempt to change SRBR with legislation in Sacramento has yet to be placed in bill form. Remember, SRBR is clearly protected by current law and is an offset against your loss of purchasing power because of inflation including increased health and funeral expenses. We will continue to monitor this situation and keep you apprised of any changes.

(President's Message concluded on page 6)

KCERA Retirement Board

By

Phil Franey, KCERA Retiree Trustee

“A retirement system board’s duty to the system’s participants and their beneficiaries shall take precedence over any other duty” (Section 17(b) of Article XVI of the California Constitution).

As I stated in last year’s TREND for July-August, over 15 years of various actions have been attempted by County Administration to circumvent the law (supported by various legal opinions) in an attempt to hijack the Supplemental Retiree Benefit Reserve (SRBR) available unallocated vested funds. To further exacerbate the situation for many years, we experienced the deliberate delay of the apportionment of available unallocated vested SRBR funds for increased retiree (current and future) and beneficiary SRBR benefits. While, during the same time, receiving complaints from the County about the increase of the SRBR unallocated vested fund balance. With a better understanding of its fiduciary duty and many changes with new trustees (less influenced by County political pressure), the KCERA Board is taking a more responsible approach to its fiduciary and legal duties in SRBR matters. Most recently and with the support of REOKC and County bargaining units, the **SRBR Death Benefit** was increased from \$3,000 to **\$5,000** (effective 1/1/15) with the remaining available unallocated vested SRBR funds being studied for further benefit allocation.

Last year the following letter was sent to the KCERA Board and referred to the KCERA Finance Committee for review and recommendation. The letter was sent and signed by representatives of Kern County Employees’ bargaining groups and REOKC to the Board of Retirement, copied to the Board of Supervisors, and excerpts read as follows:

Re: *Request to allocate benefits from the vested Supplemental Retirees Benefit Reserve.*

Dear Mr. Turnipseed and Ms. Dominguez,

The intent of this letter is to request the Kern County Employees’ Retirement Association Board of Trustees (KCERA Board) to perform its fiduciary duty and assign unallocated Supplemental Retiree Benefit Reserve (SRBR) funds. According to years of numerous legal opinions, SRBR funds are vested by law and the Board is mandated by law to allocate those funds solely for the benefit of current and future retirees and beneficiaries. There is no legal or fiduciary reason for the KCERA Board to avoid the assignment of unallocated SRBR funds to the detriment of the membership. With the exception of the 2005 death benefit increase, no action has been taken for more than 10 years.

For the record, we do have retirees in need of an inflation offset and they should not have their benefits post-

poned because of misinformed political influence. Again from the **Actuarial Study of June 30, 2013**, Retired Tier I General Members by type, population, and payment are as follows: regular retired - 3,975 members with average monthly pay of \$2,547; disabled retired - 519 members with average monthly pay of \$1,690; and beneficiaries - 697 members with average monthly pay of \$1,209. [The pay does not include any SRBR payments where they apply.] Higher risk older members in their 70s, 80s, and 90s continue to face increased living costs with more health care issues, long term care expenses, care of relatives (children and adults), etc. More detailed information is available from the previously mentioned actuarial studies at the KCERA website that shows the actuarial studies in their entirety.

SRBR benefits have not been granted since 2005 when the death benefit was increased from \$1,000 to \$3,000. Along with the death benefit, SRBR Tier 3 for the 80% inflation offset also seems to be an area of need. Other than the death benefit, more than 10 years have passed without attention to increasing the allocation of vested SRBR funds. The SRBR 20/20 Policy requires a responsible reserve for benefits and was written to conform to law while recognizing the Board’s duty to fund future benefits for all members (active and retired) when funds are available, like now. Years of no action for SRBR unallocated funds and attempting to circumvent the vesting of those funds, raises concern about responsible stewardship of vested SRBR funding.

We request that your Board take the responsible action and commission an actuarial study to explore the use of unallocated vested SRBR funds. The actuarial study evaluation and review should at least include the following relevant issues facing our membership:

- increase the death benefits from \$3,000 to \$5,000 as provided by law, and
- increase SRBR Tier 3 benefits from 80% to as much as 90% to offset inflation as intended by law.

* * * *

At the May 28, 2015 Finance Committee Meeting action was taken to approve staff recommendations for KCERA Board approval of the following agenda items : Retirement Contribution Prepayment Program, Actuarial Audit Services, 2015-16 KCERA Operating Budget, and the 2015-16 KCEA Business Plan. These items were placed on the June 10, 2015 KCERA Investment/Regular Meeting with the following additional non consent items : 1st Quarter Investment Performance Review period ended March 2015 presentation; replace small cap growth and value manager; and hiring a Phase III core hedge fund manager. All the aforementioned agenda items were approved by the KCERA Board. A more complete explanation of the agenda and minute summary will be on the recently redesigned KCERA website at kcera.org.

All members are encouraged to attend Retirement Board Meetings on the second Wednesday of each month.

DO YOU HAVE INTERNET ACCESS?

TREND EMAIL LIST CONTINUES TO GROW!

Thanks to all of you who have signed up for membership in the TREND Email list. We are almost up to saving **\$3,475.00 per year** and that's not chump change!

We need to keep this "trend" going. :)
So, if you have internet access, please email Mary Lou Bennett to sign up and help our budget.

To receive the TREND newsletter electronically:
Send an email to mlbennett36@sbcglobal.net with your name, current mailing address and your email address. (Subject: TREND mailing list).

Host/Hostess Project

During the month of April 2015,
26 volunteers worked 78 hours assisting 932 visitors at the County Administrative Building.

During the month of May 2015,
27 volunteers worked 81 hours assisting 700 visitors at the County Administrative Building.

Since 1992 our volunteers have worked over 27,700 hours assisting more than 339,000 visitors to the County Administrative Complex at 1115 Truxtun Ave.!

There is always a need for volunteers; please contact Barbara Goodlow at 304-0677 if interested.

SUNSHINE COMMITTEE NOTICE

If you know of any of our members who could use a get-well or sympathy card, please contact **JOSIE DE LA TORRE** at (661) 348-4222
Thank you!

TRAVEL TIPS

IT'S THE 3RD THURSDAY—WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

July 16, 2015: Reagan Museum 8:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.
Cost: \$85.00 Includes roundtrip bus trip, ticket entrance and box lunch
(Reservation deadline—July 8, 2015)

August 20, 2015: Getty Museum 8:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.
Cost: \$75.00 Includes roundtrip bus trip, ticket entrance and lunch
(Reservation deadline—August 12th)

Call **Julie** at **The Cruise Port**, (661) 324-6910 with any questions or to make reservations for these or other trips.

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 8 KCERA Board Meeting:
Investment/Regular Board 8:30 am
KCERA Office, 11125 River Run Blvd., Bakersfield

July 14 Health & Wealth Fair 10:00 am—2:00 pm
Norris Road Veterans' Hall
REOKC FREE Luncheon—Tickets required
(For Members and Spouses Only)
Norris Road Veterans' Hall
Lunch served from 11:30 am to 12:00 noon

August 11 REOKC Board Meeting 10:00 am
Norris Road Veterans' Hall

August 11 REOKC Lunch 11:30 am—noon
General Meeting 12:00 noon
Norris Road Veterans' Hall

August 12 KCERA Board Meeting:
Investment/Regular Board 8:30 am
KCERA Office, 11125 River Run Blvd., Bakersfield

UPCOMING REOKC PROGRAMS

July 14, 2015:

Luncheon Entertainment: **Jerry D. Hobbs**, "One Man Entertainer" will be playing Country Western and Rock and Roll music.

August 11, 2015: Speaker: **Robert Allison** from the Levan Institute of Lifelong Learning at BC. And: **David Mathis** from the CSUB Sixty Plus Club will be delivering information about their programs.

LUNCHEON MENUS

July 14th, 2015

Hamburgers & Hot Dogs
Ranch Beans
Fresh Fruit Salad
Cherry Cobbler
Iced Tea, Coffee, Water



August 11th, 2015

Mesquite Chicken Breast
Rice Pilaf with Peas & Carrots
Corn—Fresh Fruit Salad—Rolls
Home Made Peanut Butter Cookies
Iced Tea, Coffee, Water



PAYROLL DEDUCTION FORM

To sign up for (or stop) payroll deduction, check the box(es) below, complete the form, and submit it to REOKC.

- REOKC Luncheon Payment**
By checking this box, I authorize KCERA to deduct \$4.00 per month from my pension benefit as an additional elective payment to REOKC. This deduction shall begin with my next pension payment.

(Sign up for the luncheon payroll deduction and save \$1.00 per meal!)

- REOKC Membership Dues**
By checking this box, I authorize KCERA to deduct \$2.00 per month from my pension benefit as dues for my REOKC membership and to pay that organization. This deduction shall begin with my next pension payment. I understand my authorization and REOKC membership are voluntary and may be revoked by me, in writing, at any time.

Name (print) _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email (optional) _____

Social Security # _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Clip out completed form and send to:

REOKC / PO Box 2592 / Bakersfield, CA / 93303

STOP DEDUCTION(S)

- Check box to stop your deduction for the luncheon.
- Check box to stop your deduction for REOKC membership dues.



AGING & ADULT SERVICES: Cynthia D. Ruiz
AGRICULTURE: Geraldine Finnell
ASSESSOR: Anthony Ansolabehere; Cynthia Cardoza
CHILD SUPPORT: Patrick Nickolls; Josefina Valdez
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: Linda McNeely
COURTS: Joni Harcourt
ENG. & SURV. SERVICES: Jon F. Koehne; Carlos M. Riano
FIRE: Mark McDowell; Mark A. Phillips; David Sewell; Gilbert Tinoco; Kirk R. Yale
GENERAL SERVICES: Gerald M. Armistead; Carolyn Turner
HEALTH DEPARTMENT: Socorro Martinez
HUMAN SERVICES: Kara Cardamone; Sabrina Eddington-Grays; Donna Lynn Holmes; Billy D. Reed, Jr.; Aaron Sanchez
INFO. TECH. SERVICES: Ricky Rodriguez; Michael D. Smith; Jeffrey P. Tripp
K.C. WATER AGENCY: Donald Marquez
KERN MEDICAL CENTER: Kim Pham; Dorothy Pisano
MENTAL HEALTH: Deanna Cloud; Mark A. Dugan; Evelyn E. Estacio; Joyce Garza; Cassie Walker
PARKS & RECREATION: Richard D. Bramlette; Norman R. Eades; Anthony Gary
PROBATION: Michelle Smith; Richard C. York
RECORDER: Ruth West
 Michelle Smith; Richard C. York
ROADS: Kevin Dinnison
SHERIFF: Michael Forse; Thomas Fugitt; Cabrini Leathers; Scott W. Lopez; Muriel V. McElhose
WASTE MANAGEMENT: Herman Robbins
WESTSIDE M. & V. DISTRICT: Richard L. Dykes

QUOTE

Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not. Nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not. Unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not. The world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.

~ Calvin Coolidge

HISTORY

THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER

By **WALTER E. STEWART**



As we know, the words of our national anthem are from the poem, Star-Spangled Banner, by Francis Scott Key. Key was born in 1779. He was a 35-year-old lawyer held prisoner on a British frigate in Chesapeake Bay, Maryland, September 13, 1814. The British shelled Fort McHenry during the day and through the night. The morning after the shelling, standing on the deck of the British frigate, Key saw our tattered flag still flying. He was emotionally moved and deeply inspired. The experience compelled him to write the poem, Star-Spangled Banner. It was published 7 days later in the Baltimore Patriot, September 20, 1814.

If you heard the music of an old English drinking song by John Stafford Smith without words and were asked if you recognized the tune, you would probably say it is our national anthem. It became our national anthem after the first stanza of Francis Scott Key's poem, Star-Spangled Banner, was incorporated with the old English drinking song.

President Woodrow Wilson unofficially proclaimed it our national anthem in 1916; but it did not officially become our national anthem until March 2, 1931, when the 71st Congress passed a unanimous bill, signed by President Herbert Hoover, making it official.

The enormous 200 year old flag that Key saw flying over Fort McHenry is 50 feet long and has 15 stars. It hangs in the museum of History and Technology in Washington, D.C. Francis Scott Key is honored with a United States flag continuously flying over his grave in Frederick, Maryland. Key's poem, Star-Spangled Banner, has 4 stanzas encompassing 309 words. Only the first stanza, with 80 words, are sung in our national anthem.



Oh! say can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, thro' the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare, bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof thro' the night that our flag was still there.
Oh! say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

I'll bet you sang the words of the Star-Spangled Banner to yourself as you read the words.

Change of Address Form

If your address has changed, in order to receive the TREND newsletter and other important notices from REOKC, you must complete this form and send it to REOKC, PO Box 2592, Bakersfield, CA 93303:

Name _____

(print)

NEW Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

OLD Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Signature _____

REOKC USEFUL CONTACTS

KCERA Administration 661-381-7700
www.KCERA.org

- Retirement Check
- Withholding Forms
- Beneficiary Change
- Address Change (& REOKC) *
- Retirement Board Meetings

Retiree Health Benefits 661-868-3182

- County – Health Insurance Div.

REOKC Endorsed Insurance and Other Supplemental Benefits

- Pacific Group Agencies, Inc.
1-800-817-8838
1-800-511-9065

REOKC Other Related Services

- **TREND Editor**
- **Host/Hostess - Volunteer Program**
- **Membership**
- **Address/Email Change ***
- **Scholarship Program**

Mary Lou Bennett 661-871-5270

mlbennett36@sbcglobal.net

- **Luncheon Reservations**

Brenda Preston 661-204-4386

- **Sunshine (Cards of Expression)**

Josie De La Torre 661-348-4222

KCERA Board Retiree Member

- Phil Franey –
franeyp@bak.rr.com
- Alternate—John De Mario
jjdmario@aol.com

Kern County District Attorney's Office

- **Elder Abuse:** Katie Claborn
661-868-7617 or kclaborn@co.kern.ca.us

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE—concluded from page 1

Your REOKC Board is in the process of contracting for audit services and website development with separate vendors. We will have an update in our next TREND.

This year's membership Health Fair will be from 10:00A-2:00P on July 14th, the day of our BBQ luncheon (free to REOKC members). The Health Fair will be similar to the one last year except some additional information on wealth management will be provided this year. The Health Fair was very successful last year with many positive responses from our membership. Steve Pettee of Pacific Group Agencies, Inc. (PGAI) is coordinating an effort to have representatives of various supplemental benefit providers available. **PGAI Supplemental Benefits Program is a separate program from that of the County's health insurance benefit program.** The PGAI Supplemental Benefits Program is endorsed by REOKC to offer additional benefits, such as legal services and other insurances to include: dental insurance, vision, pet, and accident/travel. **The Supplemental Benefits Program is administered by PGAI, not KCERA.** Eric Barthel with Hub International, health care consultant for REOKC, solicits the services of local health care providers in offering health fair information and testing for cholesterol, blood pressure, etc. Similar to last year, retirees will be offered health information and health screenings from such providers as Kaiser, Gem Care, etc. Don't forget to bring a list of your prescriptions, as well as any herbal and/or nonprescription supplements.

As an ongoing reminder to save publishing and mailing costs, all of our 4,900 plus members are encouraged to request placement on REOKC's email list by contacting Mary Lou Bennett at mlbennett36@sbcglobal.net to receive timely notice concerning important retirement matters. You may also access past TREND issues and other important retiree information at reokc.org.

Don't forget to make your reservations for our Free BBQ luncheon (members who have payroll deductions are not required to make reservations) and make plans to attend the Health Fair on the same day, July 14th. There will be live entertainment and lunch will be served by table number beginning at 11:30 A.M.

"Humor is mankind's greatest blessing."

~ Mark Twain

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES

On the way home from church a little boy asked his mother, "Is it true Mommy, that we are made of dust?"

"Yes, darling."

"And do we go back to dust again when we die?"

"Yes, dear."

"Well, Mommy, when I said my prayers last night and looked under my bed, I found someone who is either coming or going."



**WE WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER
OUR DECEASED REOKC MEMBERS:**

Elma Allen—Kern Medical Center
Rodney Avery—Kern Medical Center
Connie Bartlett—County Adm. Office
Barbara Brown—Info. Tech. Services
Mary Cannaday—Roads
Joe Carbajal—Transportation Mgmt.
Lyle Davidson—Roads
William H. Duncan—Human Services
Luella Fleishauer—Parks & Recreation
Ruben C. Garcia—Parks & Recreation
Treba Grissom—Human Services
James Hindman—Garage
Elaine K. Korman—Health Department
Ora McDonald—Human Services
Joyce Morgan—Human Services
Helen Nelson—Library
Evelyn Phibbs—Library
Michael Rexius—Roads
Pearlie Robinson—Kern Medical Center
Patsy R. Rodgers—Human Services
Joan Schorr—Assessor
James Stockton—Ag. & Measurement Dept.
Bonita Werts—Probation
Katie Woods—Recorder

*"A life well-lived leaves behind
A beautiful bouquet of memories."*

Author unknown

Reminder: The surviving spouse of a retired Kern County Employee is eligible for REOKC membership. Just complete the Payroll Deduction Form on Page 4 and mail to:

REOKC, PO Box 2592, Bakersfield, CA 93303

NOTICE: All views and opinions expressed in the TREND are solely the representation of each writer. REOKC's only intention is to fairly inform our membership. The information presented in the TREND is believed to be from reliable sources. REOKC does not sell or disclose information about our members to third parties.

KERN FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

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Retired Employees of Kern County
P.O. Box 2592
Bakersfield, CA 93303

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July & August 2015
Time Dated Material

Official Newsletter of
The Retired Employees of Kern County Inc.

FREE July Luncheon Reservation—Members & Spouses Only (TICKETS REQUIRED)
July 14, 2015—Lunch served from 11:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon
Veterans' Hall, 400 Norris Road



If you wish to attend, please complete this reservation form to request your tickets and send it with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to **REOKC, PO Box 40801, Bakersfield, CA 93384-0801** before July 8, 2015.

(Reservations **not** necessary for payroll deduction members.)

Member's name _____ Spouse _____

Member's Phone No. _____ Total tickets _____ (This is not a valid ticket)

August Luncheon Reservation

August 11th, 2015—11:30 to noon, Veterans' Hall, 400 NORRIS ROAD. If you wish, you may use this form to order tickets for this luncheon. Please send your check, made payable to **REOKC**, together with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to **REOKC, PO Box 40801, Bakersfield, CA 93384-0801**. Deadline for reservations is the Wednesday prior to the luncheon (08/05/15). Phone reservations are not accepted. You may cancel your reservations by calling Brenda Preston at (661) 204-4386 or Mary Thorp at (661) 832-5578 prior to the deadline. Cancellations after the deadline cannot be refunded.

Member's name (\$5.00) _____ Spouse (\$5.00) _____

Member's Phone No. (required) _____ Email _____

Guest (\$8.00) _____ Total tickets _____ Amount enclosed \$ _____