



T R E N D

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

Volume MMXXIII-VI

November & December 2023

www.reokc.org

Robert Seibly, President

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



President's Message

**ROBB
SEIBLY**

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.

In this edition of the “TREND” I would like to bring to your attention two major issues that seem to come up often this time of year: Medicare and Fraud.

First issue: I hope you all know that Open Enrollment for Medicare this year is from October 15 to December 7. The Kern County Aging and Adult Services Department has information that will help you in finding what you want/need. They have highly trained HICAP Counselors that are advocates and problem solvers that can provide much needed assistance to Kern County Medicare beneficiaries and their families. One of these counselors stated (as all might) “I enjoy being able to explain how Medicare works and helps our clients feel less lost in all this information. It’s also exciting to find savings programs that clients didn’t know were available to them and help them apply for those programs.” They say that application assistance is only a phone call away. For information on Medicare Savings Programs (MSP), Low Income Subsidy/Extra Help, and/or Medi-Cal Application Assistance for Medicare Beneficiaries, call: 661-868-1000 or 1-800-434-0222.

Second Issue: We hear about Fraud and Online Scams frequently. From the Kern County HICAP

“Medicare Scoop,” summer edition newsletter; Karen Fletcher, Communication Director at CHA/SMP tells us that one of our top Medicare Scams in California right now is COVID-19 test kits. Beneficiaries and their family members are reporting boxes of unwanted tests arriving on their doorsteps, and Medicare is being billed 4-5 times the cost of the tests or more. In some cases, the beneficiaries have been billed. To help avoid these issues, beware of offers for free test kits in exchange for your personal financial information or Medicare number (this is a Scam). Important: be cautious about any unsolicited request for your personal, financial, or medical identity and information. Medicare will not call or email you. You can report any suspected Fraud (661-868-1000).

Karen Fletcher also commented to watch out for scammers calling and pretending to be with Medicare and offering you a plastic Medicare card. Medicare will NOT call and offer plastic cards; Medicare provides only paper cards. Scammers are just trying to steal your Medicare number and your identity.

You have the power to stop Scammers. It starts with knowing what to look for:

1. A call or text from a phone number you don’t recognize. (Spoofing)
2. An email from someone you don’t know that contains a link or attachments. (phishing)
3. A communication with someone that you have not initiated yourself.

(President’s Message concluded on Page 4)





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).

I hope everyone will have an enjoyable and safe holiday season with family and friends. So, have a Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. During the September and October Board Meetings, there was discussion and approval by the Board of a revised Investment Policy Statement and updated current Strategic Plan.

The Investment Policy Statement revisions consisted of the review and approval of various changes to investment objectives, strategies, and guidelines of our investment program. Periodically this process is undertaken by the investment team and Investment Committee before presentation to the KCERA Board for discussion and action - usually approval. Verus, our Investment Consultant, is also involved in the review process. This policy is imperative to the decision-making, integrity and transparency of our investment process and fiduciary duties.

The Strategic Plan revisions, as with our investment program, are periodically reviewed and approved by the Board as an important aspect of our fiduciary duties in governance. Before Board approval, the Strategic Plan is revised by Aon, our Governance Consultant, and Administrative Committee. Governance is the process and system of governing KCERA operations. This entails the structure, rules, actions, and accountability of the authority to control and direct KCERA operations. The purpose is to manage legally, ethically, sustainably, and successfully for the benefit of the members/beneficiaries and other stakeholders. The Strategic Plan also consists of a mission statement (current objectives) and vision statement (future objectives) for guidance of the organization.

As a brief reminder and important to retirement members, please read the insurance and benefit information sent from Kern County Health Benefits and Pacific Group Agencies. This edition of the TREND also includes information on both sources of benefits. As with health benefits, please remember to review your tax information this time of year.

During September and October meetings, the KCERA Board approved consent agenda items (routine and noncontroversial items) and other agenda items discussed and approved as follows: 2nd Quarter Investment Performance Review, Investment Policy Statement, other investment matters, Strategic Planning, and Nominating Committee.

During the September KCERA Board meetings the Verus presentation included the fund balance and investment performance (net of fees) for the period ending June 30, 2023 as follows:

Total Assets -	\$5,352,263,309 (Net of Fees)
1 Year	- 5.9%
3 Years	- 8.1%
5 Years	- 6.5%
10 Years	- 6.7%

As of June 30, 2024, the actuarial assumption rate will be 7.00% (expected long-term investment return) and as of June 30, 2023 current funding ratio of 67.5% (% of fund assets available to pay liabilities).

More detailed information and reporting may be obtained from the KCERA website at www.kcera.org. All members are encouraged to attend the Retirement Board with the choice of in person, by audio or audio and video. The next meeting will be held on November 1, 2023.

Nothing more completely baffles one who is full of tricks and duplicity than straight forward and simple integrity in another.

- Charles Caleb Colton

QUOTES

“A woman is like a tea bag; you can’t tell how strong she is until you put her in hot water.”

Eleanor Roosevelt

“Women marry men hoping they will change. Men marry women hoping they will not . So each is inevitably disappointed.”

Albert Einstein

“You know you’re getting old when you stoop to tie your shoelaces and wonder what else you could do while you’re down there.”

George Burns

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 \$6.00 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) _____

Dept. from which retired _____

Full 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.



"WELCOME!" **NEW MEMBERS OF THE** **RETIRED EMPLOYEES OF** **KERN COUNTY**

DISTRICT ATTORNEY: Lisa R. Clark

FIRE: Brandon Smith

HUMAN SERVICES: Antoinette Cauzza;
Leticia Villanueva

KERN MEDICAL CENTER: Frances L. Wilson

PUBLIC HEALTH: Olivia Ibarra

***REOKC wishes all Kern County
retirees
a long and happy retirement!***

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE - concluded

If you receive a text or email you are unsure of from an unknown sender, do not click on any links or open any attachments. When in doubt, do not give out any personal or account information, hang up, and call the company directly using the phone number provided on their billing statement, documentation, or website. Remember, not all communications are potentially fraudulent, but some can be, so try to be wise in your decisions.

Keep yourself and your family safe and have a wonderful Holiday Season. Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas, and don't forget Veterans Day and the parade on November the 11th. Hope to see you all safe, healthy, and at our next REOKC Luncheon (more information in this newsletter).

Robb Seibly

PONDERISMS

- ~ Hard to believe I once had a phone attached to a wall, and when it rang, I picked it up without knowing who was calling.
- ~ My wife says I keep pushing her buttons. If that were true, I would have found mute by now.
- ~ A happy man is never poor; an unhappy man is never rich.

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

**Princess Cruise line - Crown Princess
Alaska Roundtrip San Francisco
July 20 -31, 2024**

Balcony Cabin \$3281.00 per person based on double occupancy. Rate includes the Princess Plus package & vacation protection. Rates are based on availability and can change at any time.

San Francisco, Ketchikan, Sitka, Juneau, Tracy Arm Fjord (Scenic Cruising) & Victoria, Canada

**Princess Cruise Line - Enchanted Princess
Canada/New England Roundtrip New York
September 28 to October 5, 2024**

Balcony cabin \$1897.00 per person based on double occupancy. Rate includes the Princess Plus package & Vacation Protection. Rates are based on availability and can change at any time.

New York City (Manhattan or Brooklyn), New York - Newport, Rhode Island - Boston, Massachusetts - Bar Harbor, Maine - Saint John (for the Bay of Fundy), Canada - Portland, Maine

**Globus Escorted Bus Trip
11 Days Rome to Rome
September 11 - 21, 2024**

\$3949.00 Per person based on double occupancy plus airfare & travel insurance. Single rate is \$4569.00 plus airfare and travel insurance.

ROME, ITALY - ORVIETO - MONTECATINI
EXCURSION TO FLORENCE - PISA - VENICE ISLAND
ASSISI - POMPEII - NAPLES - SORRENTO - ROME

**Julie Salazar-Garcia
(661) 324-6910
cruiseport@sbcglobal.net**

The Cruise Port, 1800 Oak St., Suite D,
Bakersfield, CA

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.

Pacific Group Agencies, Inc.

- Supplemental Insurance Plans
Available at Discounted Rates
1-800-511-9065

REOKC Other Related Services

- **TREND Editor**
- **Membership**
- **Address/Email Change ***
- **Scholarship Program**

Mary Lou Bennett 661-871-5270
mlbennett36@sbcglobal.net

- **Sunshine (Cards of Expression)**
Josie De La Torre 661-348-4222

KCERA Board Retiree Member

- Phil Franey –
franeyp@bak.rr.com
- Alternate—Robb Seibly -
seiblyrl@gmail.com

Kern County District Attorney’s Office

- **Elder Abuse: 661 868-2400**

Kern County Aging & Adult Services

- **661 868-1000**

**REOKC SUPPLEMENTAL BENEFIT PLANS
OPEN ENROLLMENT**

**Dental, Vision, Travel, Accident, Legal Shield, Home,
Identity Theft, Pet Care & More**

By Greg Margulies, Pacific Group Agencies

The 2024 REOKC Benefits Guides for this year’s Open Enrollment have been mailed to all retirees. You should have received your copy in the mail during October. This Benefits Guide details all the plans available exclusively to REOKC members.

Benefit plans available include both a PPO & HMO Dental plan, VSP Vision, Travel, Accident, Legal Shield, ID Theft protection, Home Warranty, Pet Care, and much more. Coverages are available to the REOKC member, their spouse, and dependent children.

Please make sure to take a moment to look through the Benefits Guide as the Open Enrollment period ends November 10th. If for any reason you did not receive a Benefits Guide, please email:

REOKC@pgagencies.com

and request a Benefits Guide. A pdf version will be emailed to you.

REMINDER

Open Enrollment period for
Kern County Health Benefits
ends

November 9, 2023



**Levan Institute
for Lifelong Learning
Classes for Life**

Our fun, useful classes are aimed at the interests of those 55+ in our community. Some are in-person and some are on Zoom. Learn something new!

For a list of all our classes and to register, go to <https://www.bakersfieldcollege.edu/academics/levan-institute/index.html> or get there by Googling “Levan Institute for Lifelong Learning” or call (661) 395-4431. Check out our Facebook Page, too. Sign up now!



The holiday season is upon us and everyone at KCERA would like to wish our retired members a wonderful Thanksgiving, merry Christmas, and happy New Year! We hope you can find time to celebrate with family and friends.

It has been a busy year at KCERA. We launched multiple recruitments this fall and anticipate adding several new team members before the year’s end.

KCERA offices will be closed from 12/22/23-01/01/24 for winter recess. You can view your pension payment date on our website www.kcera.org.

Investment News: For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023, the Plan returned 5.9% net of fees, and Plan assets stood at \$5.35 billion.

The Investment Team and the general investment consultant completed an asset liability study, and the Board of Retirement approved a new asset allocation in August. An asset liability study is a key project which is completed every 3-5 years. The new asset allocation makes the following changes:

- decrease public equity
- increase private credit
- restructure fixed income

The Investment Team will look to implement changes over the next several quarters. If you have any questions regarding your retirement, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

KCERA Member Services

(661) 381-7700

memberservices@kcera.org

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.

CHECKING | SAVINGS | HOME & AUTO LOANS



**GRAND
OPENING
NOVEMBER
30TH**

2830 Hwy 46
(Walmart Shopping Center)



STRATA
CREDIT UNION

For More Information
www.stratacu.org
661.327.9461



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

**PRSRT-STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BAKERSFIELD, CA
PERMIT NO. 349**

**November & December 2023
Time Dated Material**

**Official Newsletter of
The Retired Employees of Kern County Inc.**

REOKC LUNCHEONS AT HODEL'S

5917 KNUDSEN DRIVE, BAKERSFIELD

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2023

LIBERTY HALL (building north end of parking lot)

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2023

LIBERTY HALL (building north end of parking lot)

Members without payroll luncheon deductions will pay at the door each month.

**REOKC members and their spouses \$7.00 each
Guests \$10.00**

Doors will be open at 10:45 a.m. Lunches served at 11:30 a.m.

(Payments requiring no change will be greatly appreciated)