

May 23, 2022

TO: CalHR Bargaining Team

After 45 years as a geologist with the California Geological Survey in the Department of Conservation, I retired from State service a few weeks ago. For approximately the last 20 years, I served as a Senior Geologist (Specialist), a rank-and-file position in the Geologist Series, which is represented by CAPS. In this senior position, I have been a team and project leader, overseeing and guiding the work of journey-level Engineering Geologists in Bargaining Unit 9, whose salaries have exceeded my own. Finally, I have seen and experienced the overall frustration of rank-and-file scientists that has occurred over the last 17 years when Unit 9 salaries radically increased over those of Bargaining Unit 10 after being virtually equal.

First, I bring to your attention the part of the current CAPS salary proposal that stipulates a retroactive salary increase back to last July, 2021. This increase would address the grossly large vertical salary differential between rank-and-file staff and supervisory staff in various scientific job-classification series. Besides correcting much of the many-year inequity that has burdened State scientists, it could also significantly improve the pensions of scientists, like myself, who have retired since July, 2021. If this or any other retroactive increase is not implemented, these retired scientists potentially will not receive any kind of inequity compensation for their years of service to the state. In other words, now is the final chance for these recent retirees to receive at least some inequity compensation.

Second, although I am no longer in this picture, it is essential that current and future State scientists receive equitable salaries on par with those employees in Unit 9 whose job types and responsibilities are identical or very similar. This equivalence also applies to Unit 10 staff in comparison to federal and local-government scientists. The numerous complex health, environmental, and natural-resource problems affecting society, particularly those from the Covid-19 pandemic and the Earth's changing climate, require that State government recruit and retain scientific staff at all levels of careers.

After 17 years of collective bargaining over this issue of salary inequity, you and your predecessors have read and heard all of the arguments for correcting this inequity. With an approximately \$100 billion budget surplus this year and an approximately \$75 billion surplus last year, the funds are there. Yes, there will be economic downturns in the future. But if State administrations are always reluctant to do what's fair and right because they are afraid that famine inevitably follows feast, State scientists will never be granted equitable salaries with their peers in other job classifications.

Please invest in your current and future State scientists. All people living in California (and beyond) need them to be among the leaders and innovators in finding solutions to the many complex issues and problems that world society faces.

Thank you.
Chris T. Higgins