

# UTLA-Retired News August – September 2016

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*A special thank you to UTLA-Retired Secretary Mignon Jackson for gathering the handouts and sharing her notes with me during my absence while I was traveling.*

## August 26, 2016 UTLA-Retired General Assembly Highlights

The meeting was opened with a moment of silence in memory of UTLA-Retire members Marco Vallery and Bonnie Tompkins.

**UTLA-Retired President John Perez** presented his President's Report speaking about the continuing SilverScript problems experienced by members. Contact Mariam Hironimus, LAUSD, at [miriam.hornimus@lausd.net](mailto:miriam.hornimus@lausd.net) for information about your specific issues. Also contact UTLA President Alex Caputo-Pearl at [acaputopearl@utla.net](mailto:acaputopearl@utla.net) and UTLA AFT Vice President Betty Forrester at [bforrester@utla.net](mailto:bforrester@utla.net) to make your specific SilverScript issues known to UTLA Leadership. He continued his report and indicated that our lifetime benefits are not at risk but we might have to contribute to the premium payment as a part of the bargaining for new health benefits contracts in early 2017.

John also spoke about the November 2017 elections. Of critical importance is the passage of Proposition 55: *The Children's Education and Health Care Protection Act* and Proposition 58: *The LEARN Initiative*. Proposition 55 will maintain the current tax rates on the wealthiest Californians (Earning more than \$250,000 per year) to prevent billions of dollars in funding cuts for public education and other vital services. Proposition 58 will make it easier to establish bilingual programs for English Language Learners so all students can learn English as quickly as possible.

He also made a request for volunteers to work in this election either with UTLA phone banking or with CFT or AFL-CIO in 'battleground states' in activities such as precinct walking, voter registration, phone banking or GOTV. Some expenses will be covered. Members interested in working with CFT should contact retired CFT staffer Margaret Shelleda at [mshjelleda@aol.com](mailto:mshjelleda@aol.com) or [mshelleda@cft.org](mailto:mshelleda@cft.org).

**UTLA-Retired Treasure Mike Dreebin** reported an initial balance of about \$52,000 in the UTLA-Retired budget for the new UTLA calendar year. Much of the budget will be allocated to allow UTLA-Retired members to participate in conferences and meetings on issues affecting retirees.

**Health Benefits Committee Member Loretta Toggenburger** reviewed Health Benefits FAQ from the LAUSD Health Benefits Committee that addressed '*Your Rights as a Health Plan Member and What to Do If...*' and '*Autoimmune Disorders or Diseases*'.

**UTLA-R Vice President Cecilia Boskin** presented the *Membership and PACE Report* and stated that current UTLA-R membership is about 4300 members. She also stated that UTLA-R members have contributed about \$1000 to UTLA PACE so far this year. Continuing UTLA-Retired membership recruitment is important and that current members should speak to former colleagues and friends who have recently retired.

UTLA-R members were also reminded that their participation in the UTLA political process is still vital and that UTLA-R member PACE contributions may be mailed to her at *Cecilia Boskin, 3547*

*Federal Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90066.* Remember that PACE contributions will fund the campaign to elect public education advocates to office and support UTLA pro public education issues and our contract benefits.

**UTLA-R Legislative Chair Mary Rose** did not submit a report.

**Election Committee Member Frank Anderson** announced elections for UTLA-Retired members of the UTLA House of Representative will be held at the October 14 UTLA-Retired General Assembly meeting and that the elections for the UTLA-Retired Steering Committee will be held at the January 20, 2017 General Assembly meeting. Refer to the UNITED TEACHER for Rules, Timeline and Forms.

**Announcements:**

- October 19 UTLA-R Fall Luncheon will be at Café Bizou, Sherman Oaks at 1:00PM
- Docents are being requested for Los Angeles City Hall tours
- UTLA Pre Retirement Conference will be on October 1 at UTLA
- LA County Fed will meet at 10:00AM on October 10.
- Labor Day Parade in Wilmington beginning at 10:00AM

**Guest Speaker: Liz Zeliski, Ph.D., Professor of Gerontology and Psychology, University of Southern California** spoke on the topic of “How to Improve your Memory”.

*Highlights Of Points And Ideas Presented*

- Memory progression: acquire, store, retain, and retrieve information.
- Major processes involved in memory: encoding, storage, and [retrieval](#).
- Specific kinds of memory problems: Transience (information is lost), Absent mindedness, Blocking, Misattribution, Suggestibility, Persistence
- The older we get the more we remember the positive.
- People who think their health is good have good memories.
- More education – The better we do.
- Many of things affect your memory.
- Being socially involved helps your memory
- Volunteer work helps your memory
- A Mediterranean diet helps your memory
- Brain training requires active work from you on a daily basis
- Repeat, Relive
- Employ mental flexibility
- Patience
- Stop think about the material
- Put it in writing
- Additional Research and Studies are available at USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology

The meeting was adjourned at 12:35PM following the drawing for the flowers.

## HEALTH BENEFITS FAQ— AUTOIMMUNE DISORDERS OR DISEASES

### What is an autoimmune disorder or disease?

The body's immune system protects us from disease and harmful substances such as bacteria, viruses, toxins, cancer cells, and other pathogens from outside the body. When a person has an autoimmune disorder, the immune system does not distinguish between healthy cells and unhealthy ones. As a result, the body sets off a reaction that attacks healthy cells.

### What are some common autoimmune diseases?

There are more than 80 autoimmune diseases, with the most common being:

- *Rheumatoid arthritis* - inflammation of joints and surrounding tissues
- *Systemic lupus erythematosus* - affects skin, joints, kidneys, brain, and other organs
- *Celiac disease* - a reaction to gluten (found in wheat, rye, and barley) that causes damage to the lining of the small intestine
- *Pernicious anemia* - a decrease in red blood cells caused by an inability to absorb vitamin B12
- *Vitiligo* - white patches on the skin caused by loss of pigment
- *Scleroderma* - a connective tissue disease that causes changes in skin, blood vessels, muscles, and internal organs
- *Psoriasis* - a skin condition that causes redness and irritation as well as thick, flaky, silverwhite patches
- *Inflammatory bowel diseases* - a group of inflammatory diseases of the colon and small intestine
- *Hashimoto's disease* - inflammation of the thyroid gland
- *Addison's disease* - adrenal hormone insufficiency
- *Graves' disease* - overactive thyroid gland
- *Reactive arthritis* - inflammation of joints, urethra, and eyes; may cause sores on the skin and mucus membranes
- *Sjögren's syndrome* - destroys the glands that produce tears and saliva causing dry eyes and mouth; may affect kidneys and lungs
- *Type 1 diabetes* - destruction of insulin producing cells in the pancreas

**What are the symptoms of autoimmune diseases?** Symptoms vary with each type of autoimmune disease. Some common symptoms include fatigue, fever, and general malaise (feeling ill). Symptoms worsen during flare-ups and lessen during remission. The most common organs and tissues affected are joints, muscles, skin, red blood cells, blood vessels, connective tissue, and endocrine glands.

**Who gets an autoimmune disease?** Studies show that women of childbearing age, people with a family history of autoimmune disease, certain environmental factors, and people from certain ethnic backgrounds are most at risk. Researchers believe hormones play an important role in women since hormonal changes during pregnancy can cause symptoms to get either worse or better, depending on the disease. Type 1 diabetes is more common in white people, while lupus is three times more common in African American women, and also more common in Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian women.

**How is an autoimmune disorder/disease treated?** Are there cures? There are no known cures for autoimmune disease and treatment typically focuses on reducing symptoms and preventing organ damage. Examples include insulin injections to regulate blood sugar in diabetics, drugs to control inflamed kidneys for people with lupus, and drugs that suppress the immune system. If you have an autoimmune disorder, visit your doctor regularly so that you can catch changes before they lead to serious damage, tell your doctor if symptoms flare up, and be sure to talk to your doctor before starting any alternative treatments, such as natural supplements.

**HEALTH BENEFITS FAQ—  
YOUR RIGHTS AS A HEALTH PLAN MEMBER AND WHAT TO DO IF...?**

**What rights do I have as a member of my medical plan?**

In California, health plan members have many rights, and more were granted under health care reform. You have the right to:

- Have an appointment when you need one. There are limits on how long you have to wait for an appointment.
- Have an appointment with a specialist when you need one.
- Request continuity of care if your doctor or medical group leaves your plan.
- Receive treatment for certain mental health conditions.
- Obtain a second doctor's opinion.
- Know why your plan denies a service or treatment.
- Understand your health problems and treatments.
- See a written diagnosis (description of your health problem).
- Give informed consent when you have a treatment.

**What do I do if I cannot schedule an appointment with my doctor for several months?**

For all health plans, contact customer service and explain your situation. The representative should be able to help you with a solution. If your condition is critical, Health Net, for example, will assign you a case manager to guide and assist with authorization and/or setting up appointments. Kaiser members can call the appointment service to leave a message for a doctor; the doctor's nurse should get back to you with advice on what to do. As an alternative, a member can visit an urgent care facility for immediate treatment of a sudden injury or illness. You may also call the District's Health Benefits office at 213.241.2462 or AALA for assistance.

**What do I do if I am denied an authorization for surgery or any other denial related to my medical plan?**

Members should call their plan's customer service number to file an oral appeal or grievance. Standard appeal and grievance cases are determined within 30 business days. Expedited appeals and grievances, upon meeting criteria, can be finalized within 72 business hours. If the member is not satisfied with the plan's final decision, he/she can then escalate the issue to the Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC).

**I was recently denied authorization for a prescription I need. What should I do?**

Contact the prescribing doctor and request he contact your pharmacist. Drugs that need prior authorization include drugs with dangerous side effects, those harmful when combined with other drugs, drugs that should only be used for certain health conditions, drugs most often misused or abused, and those a doctor prescribes when less expensive drugs might work as well.

**My refill date will occur while on vacation. How do I get an extra supply for my trip?**

Contact your pharmacy and you should be able to get an extra month's supply.