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CALIFORNIA PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS

State Council of the International Association of Fire Fighters



'Mutual Aid' Key to Restoring California's Tarnished Gold

You hear it everywhere ... from the halls of government to the corner grocery store: "It's just different this time."

Like the rest of the United States, California is in the grips of an economic crisis rivaling the worst in our history. And as the discouraging winter of 2008 transitions into a desperate spring of 2009, few see a quick turnaround on the horizon.

"It is likely to be the worst recession since the Great Depression," concludes Stephen Levy, director of the Center for the Continuing Study of the California Economy.

The scope of the economic collapse in California and the nation blares out from the numbing procession of statistics:

- Unemployment is at a 26-year high (8.1 percent nationally, 10.4 percent in California);
- Home values are down 52 percent from 2006;
- One in ten homes are in foreclosure;
- The Dow Jones Industrials at their lowest levels in a decade;
- Marquee businesses and financial institutions – from Citi to Circuit City – have been forced into bankruptcy, or are among the "walking wounded."

California – Worst Among Equals?

While the entire nation has been gripped by economic calamity, certain sectors of the collapse have hit California harder than the rest of the nation:

Housing – Bring soaring housing costs together with risky sub-prime lending and you've got the "perfect storm" of the housing crash. Four of the ten cities in the U.S. with the highest foreclosure rates are in California.

Unemployment – The housing construction boom bolstered

employment numbers in the good times. When construction stopped, those jobs went away. More importantly, says Levy, more people were added to the overall workforce in the state, without jobs available to absorb them. Some areas are especially hard-hit: In Fresno County, unemployment is near 16 percent.

Sales and Manufacturing – Consumer spending was down 70 percent in December. In some industries, production is running at only 25 percent of capacity. In Silicon Valley, few companies have avoided significant layoffs.

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California Professional Firefighters
1780 Creekside Oaks, Suite 200
Sacramento, CA 95833

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In this issue, we focus on California's economic crisis. We have brought together guest columnists with a variety of perspectives on our current troubles and how, working together, we can bring our state back. Please send us your thoughts — info@cpf.org.



CALIFORNIA'S ECONOMIC FIRESTORM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Tourism – Hotel occupancy rates have plunged as individuals put off vacations and businesses cut back on travel. Occupancy in bellwether San Francisco is down nearly 20 percent, and passport applications are down by one-third.

Agriculture – California is in its third year of drought, forcing many farmers to move to less water-intensive crops or, in some cases, leave land fallow altogether. Upwards of 10,000 farm workers could be left out of work this year.

Retirement Security – Even as firefighters fight to secure pensions, private employers in California have led the transition to higher-risk 401(k) retirement plans. Californians who don't have a secure pension have seen half of their retirement nest egg disappear in the last nine months. And even those with pensions wonder if it will still be there for them when they retire.

"The recession went from the housing to the banking sectors to a sharp downturn in the stock market," said Levy. "It has morphed into a consumer-driven recession ... a major recession of fear and job loss."

Hitting Where You Live

But you don't need to read the business page to see the evidence of California's desperate situation. You can see it in the empty windows and shuttered doors that pockmark even the ritziest of shopping centers. You can see it in the tightened household budgets made necessary by job loss or "furlough days." You can see it in the around-the-block lines at every Denny's in the state one February morning when the restaurant chain offered a free breakfast.

"This recession is not just hitting those in the lower-income brackets," said Jean Ross with the California Budget Project. "In many ways, it is hitting hardest on all working families."

For those whose paychecks are cut by public agencies, the recession has hit with mind-boggling force.

As incomes, property values and consumption drop, tax revenues have shrunk dramatically. In Sacramento, Governor Schwarzenegger and the Legislature were forced into a torturous combination of spending reductions and tax hikes to close an unfathomable \$42 billion budget gap. And even the most penny-pinching local agencies have been forced to scale back.

"A year or two ago, when a city manager said, 'We don't have any money,' it was a negotiating ploy," said one CPF-affiliate president. "Now when they say, 'We don't have any money,' guess what ... they don't."

Public Safety Won't Be Spared This Time

Because the public has made it clear that safety remains their top budget priority, fire and law enforcement services have largely been avoided when times are bad. But here again, it is different this time. In the Recession of 2009, the choices forced upon CPF local unions and their leaders have been as difficult as they've ever been:

- **Layoffs:** **Chico** firefighters actually received layoff notices, before negotiating a pay reduction to save jobs. **Sacramento City, Riverside County** and **Redding** have also been threatened with mass layoffs. **Garden Grove** has left more than 40 positions vacant.
- **Station closures:** Brownouts have been imposed in **Alameda City, Modesto, Anaheim** and **Santa Rosa**, among others. **The City of El Monte** is among those considering shuttering one or more stations entirely.
- **Reduced engine staffing:** **San Mateo City, Santa Barbara City** and **Sacramento City** have all been threatened with reduction of staffing on engines.
- **Pay and benefit cuts:** Fortunate indeed is the local union that has been able to preserve or obtain pay and benefit increases. In most cases, locals are being asked to make concessions in order to stave off layoffs. **Escondido**,



Newly imported cars fill the 150-acre site at the Toyota distribution center in Long Beach, Calif.

San Bernardino City, Ontario, Chico, Lodi, Ventura City are among many locals that have accepted salary concessions to protect jobs.

As bad as this sounds, it is even worse for other public employee services.

Teachers, construction workers, administrative personnel, librarians ... all have seen staffing and hours disappear. And at a time when unemployment is at its worst level in a generation, state and local agencies are slashing budgets for the social safety net, including job training and employment services.

2009 ... And Beyond

Is the end in sight? It depends on who you talk to.

The National Association of Business Economics predicts the economy will bottom out in the middle of the year and employment won't start to turn around until 2010. Next year is also the earliest Moody's chief economist Mark Zandi says we should expect to see the bottom. Zandi also told *The Sacramento Bee* that it could be a decade before the Dow Jones approaches last year's levels.

is how broad-based it is across occupations, industries and regions," said Zandi.

For firefighters and other public employees, the outlook will likely stay difficult. Even as it implements the budget passed in February, state economic officials already expect that the 2009-2010 budget could already be \$8 billion short. And most local agencies expect their new budgets will require even deeper cuts in services.

If there is any light on the horizon, it comes in part from the expected impact of the \$800 billion economic stimulus package. At least \$30 billion, and as much as \$80 billion, could flow directly or indirectly to the state. Many of the priorities identified by the stimulus, and the new Obama administration, play directly into California's leadership in technology and green energy.

"The national agenda is emphasizing areas that California is good at," said Levy.

Levy says we can look to employment, retail spending and other "bread and butter" financial numbers to point the way out of the recession. Ultimately, though, the most important variable in the fate of the economy may have nothing to do with starchy indicators and economic modeling. It could be as simple as our attitude about where things are going.

"Everything hinges on confidence, sentiment of business, consumers and investors," Zandi told *The Bee*. "And it won't take a lot to make people feel a lot better."



A billboard in Vallejo illustrates one town's diminishing public safety.



LOU PAULSON

PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Surviving a Tsunami

When we're on duty, we live and work right in the middle of the communities we serve. Our fire stations are located in the center of neighborhoods, business districts, and civic centers. Our constituents are also our neighbors.

Right now, our neighbors are feeling a lot of pain.

The economic litany is, by now, depressingly familiar. Every day, it seems, brings news of another mass layoff – 1,000 jobs here, 5,000 there. One week, the newspaper is stuffed with a flyer from a local electronics store. The next week, the store is closed forever. The week after, the newspaper itself is announcing layoffs.

As firefighters, we've been lucky enough to enjoy strong support from the public ... whether it's on staffing, equipment, training or even compensation. Sometimes we tend to take for granted that this support will be there no matter what.

If there's one thing we've learned in the last year, it's that nobody can take anything for granted anymore.

We need to comprehend what's going on beyond the walls of the firehouse. For that reason, we are devoting much of this issue of the *California Professional Firefighter* to the economic crisis in our state.

- We've talked to some of the foremost experts on the state's economy and state and local fiscal policy;
- We've invited guest columnists from a number of perspectives to add their voices to ours ... from labor to education;
- We have a representative of CalPERS to offer perspective on how the crisis might affect our retirement security;
- We provide some hands-on ideas and case studies of how local unions are responding to the crisis on the front lines.

As firefighters, it's especially important that we understand the "wide-angle" view because the economy is driving many of the budget issues confronting our local leadership.

Even some of our most experienced leaders say they've never seen the fiscal situation this bad. For some CPF affiliates, 2009 is the first year they've been confronted with the prospect of layoffs, brownouts, or salary and benefit give-backs.

Many of our local agencies are facing legitimate budget issues brought on by the economic crisis – the combination of lower tax revenues, fewer dollars from Sacramento and an increase in pressure on the social safety net. In such situations, we must be mindful of the economic realities and, where we can, work with our local officials to find a path out of the darkness.

Of course, being pragmatic doesn't mean we stop fighting for our core principles. As we've learned from the Vallejo bankruptcy case, there are many local governments that are using the economy as a pretext to impose harsh rollbacks in basic public safety services. We must continue to fight against such cynical abuse of the budget process.

As firefighters, we have a uniquely important value in the fiscal battles ahead. The public's positive view of firefighters and the high priority placed on public safety are advantages no other employee group can match.

Your local union is in the trenches advocating your interests. Their negotiating efforts and strong political action are saving jobs and hard-won benefits on a daily basis. And in those instances where local bureaucrats are on the attack, it is your local union that is standing up for your rights.

As with any effort, however, a union is only as strong as its membership. More than just about any other labor organization, firefighters have a direct connection with their union leaders. We live with you at the firehouse ... we work next to you on calls and strike teams. You are the union.

Now more than ever, I urge you to get involved with your local union. It's your future, and that of your family, that is at stake in the current economic crisis. I would also encourage you to stay active in your community, through your local union or just in your daily lives.

We are all in this together.

Education Cuts Bring Tough Times to California Schools



**David A. Sanchez, President
California Teachers Association**

Although uncertain economic times leave all of us with many questions about what lies ahead, there is absolutely no doubt the more than \$11 billion in cuts to education funding in the recently passed state budget ensure a bleak outlook for students, their families and the entire population of California. Even before these devastating new cuts, nationally our state ranked only three states from the bottom in education funding per student.

Tough budget times are resulting in painful cuts for many Californians and all essential public services. Public education suffered the single largest reduction in state history. To illustrate the magnitude of the cuts, \$11.6 billion in slashed funds is equivalent to:

- \$49,153 less per classroom
- Laying off 165,714 teachers, or
- Laying off 290,000 custodians, food service workers, bus drivers and other classified employees, or
- Closing California's schools for 40 days, or
- Swelling class sizes by up to 55 percent.

Even now, school districts across California are issuing Reduction in Force (RIF) layoff notices to thousands of teachers and education support professionals, meaning that class sizes will increase, critical student programs will be eliminated, and qualified students will be turned away from a higher education. Nearly 20,000 layoff notices have been sent to educators so far. These cuts will impact an entire generation of children, escalating California's race to the ultimate bottom in education funding.

On March 2, I visited classrooms in the Chula Vista Elementary School District as part of CTA's annual Read Across

America campaign to promote literacy and help children learn the importance of reading. In one class, I witnessed a group of second graders reading together in English and Spanish while being taught by a young, talented and enthusiastic teacher. What if this bright young man is terminated this year as result of these budget cuts? And what if it were your son, daughter, or grandchild who would be deprived of the opportunity to thrive in the rich learning environment created by this teacher? Now multiply that scenario thousands upon thousands of times across California.

Our students are also losing critical education programs. The Millbrae School District just announced it is eliminating all band and music programs. This means nearly 400 kids in grades four through eight will no longer have the opportunity to learn how to play an instrument or be part of the school choir. In fact, it's hard to find an art or vocational education program in our high schools today. We are eliminating the very programs that help bring the joy of learning to our students. We all want more for our children and their future.

CTA and **California Professional Firefighters** have built a strong

working relationship over recent years. It's a relationship that I value not only for the work you do every day protecting our homes and communities but for the many similarities that we share. We both work to make our neighborhoods and our state a better place to live. I want to recognize your president, **Lou Paulson** and all the firefighters across the state who have been a part of important education programs, including Read Across America. Firefighter visits to local schools are always a welcome treat to young kids.

To quote the recent UCLA Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access report on educational opportunity in California, "Piecemeal funding reforms will not improve California's education position among the states and won't relieve California parents of the burden of relying on luck, wealth, or personal sacrifice to get a decent education for their children. The time to start building a new system of educational finance and governance is now."

After all, investing in public education is an investment in the economic future of our state.

David A. Sanchez is president of the California Teachers Association.
www.CTA.org

Union Membership Key to Economy and Healthy Middle Class



**Art Pulaski
Executive Secretary-Treasurer
California Labor Federation**

The worldwide economic tsunami has left a devastated middle class in its wake, and California workers are among the hardest hit. One in ten California workers are now unemployed, up from six percent just one year ago. Those who still have jobs are facing devastating cuts to paychecks, healthcare and pensions. It's times like these when we truly value the security we've gained through our union contracts.

Unions hold the key to getting our economy back on track. When workers earn higher wages and adequate benefits, they have more money to spend in their communities, which is the best way to stimulate our local and state economy. Recent reports have found that if just five percent more of California workers became union members, \$3.7 billion would be pumped into the state's economy.

Union workers, on average, earn 30 percent more than nonunion workers, are 59 percent more likely to have

employer health coverage and are four times more likely to have pensions. More than half of U.S. workers who are not in a union now would like to join one if they could.

It's no secret that there are powerful forces arrayed against us, and they're using the economic downturn as a weapon. Corporations spend millions on aggressive anti-union firms that know how to bend or even break the law without penalty. Nine out of ten companies force workers to attend anti-union one-on-one meetings with their bosses. Meanwhile, union organizers aren't even allowed on company grounds to talk to workers. One in three companies actually fire union supporters during organizing campaigns.

Current laws do not respect workers' choice, and what's worse, they promote wage inequality, which is devastating our middle class and contributing to our economic woes. That's why every union is uniting to pass the Employee Free Choice

Act before Congress. If passed, the bill will restore workers' freedom to form and join unions without harassment and intimidation. The bill would also establish stronger penalties against employers who violate workers' rights, and it would make sure union workers get a fair contract in a reasonable amount of time.

For many of us in labor, the Employee Free Choice Act is the issue of this generation. It is a fight we can't afford to lose. With our economy in shambles, working families are counting on the labor movement to give them fresh hope for a better tomorrow. And we must deliver for the sake of our economy, and the future of our children and grandchildren.

With the free choice to form unions, we can finally counterbalance corporate power and rebuild our middle class.

Art Pulaski is executive secretary-treasurer of the California Labor Federation.
www.WorkingCalifornia.org

California's Economic Crisis and Working Families



Jean Ross
Director of the
California Budget Project

Even more than in past recessions, the current economic crisis has hit especially hard in California, and especially hard at working families. We talked with Jean Ross, who directs the non-partisan California Budget Project (www.cbp.org), whose mission is to promote policies to improve the economic and social well-being of lower- and middle-income families.

Where is the impact of the economic downturn most clearly felt amongst those in lower- and middle-income brackets?

Walk down the street and you're likely to see someone of working age who wants a job and can't find one. If you go back to the summer of 2006, California's unemployment and that of the nation were about the same – in the mid-5 percent range. What's happened in the last few years is we've seen a very wide gap open up between California and the nation as a whole. Our unemployment now runs two and a half percent higher than that for the country as a whole. We now have substantially higher unemployment.

Is there a reason for higher unemployment?

California was really ground zero of the housing crisis. The mortgage crisis, the financial crisis, the foreclosure crisis ... all were most severe in California. As a result, you see a dramatic drop-off in incomes and employment for anybody who is in any kind of housing-related industry, from escrow officers to mortgage lenders to people who are in construction. What you've seen, and this is different from other recent recessions, is a big hit on retail spending, because consumers are anxious ... they're not buying anything. In many ways, the most severe impact isn't on the poorest of the poor. Really it's hitting hardest on working families.

Is there more pressure on the social safety net because of the economy?

Yes. We've seen more pressure on food banks, shelters and emergency food providers, with demand in parts of the state that you typically don't associate with that kind of demand. Food stamp caseloads have gone up dramatically as have those for the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) program. If you talk to the people on the front lines, they'll tell you that they're seeing a clientele that is more upscale than those who have historically come through their doors ... people who are not used to applying for public assistance. They come in wearing professional clothing but need help because they have lost a job.

Are state and local government victims of the economic downturn or do their policies contribute to it?

Both. Certainly you are seeing particularly among service providers such as counties, that they have had their funding cut back over time, so they have to do more with less even before the downturn. There are layoffs for teachers, school employees and local government

and furloughs, which hit people who are already stretched with mortgage payments or college expenses.

What impact will the state budget have on all this?

We did see, in the recent budget, deep cuts in a lot of safety net programs, including programs for people – like the elderly and those with disabilities – who have few options. The same with some of the cuts to counties, who are on the front lines of providing social services. You could argue that when your demand is going up, you shouldn't be cutting back funding.

Will the federal stimulus package help relieve this burden at all?

One of the things that's troubling is that the president and Congress just passed a very substantial bill aimed at trying to jumpstart the economy. Unfortunately, when you see those dollars flow to California, a lot of the benefits people are hoping to see from the federal bill are going to be erased by the recent state budget agreement. I'll give you an example. The federal bill provided certain tax benefits for middle income and working families. In the president's new budget, he's going to tax higher income families. But the tax choices made in the new

state budget penalize the precise people the federal plan is trying to help, and lets high-income people off the hook. The federal government is sending more money to people on SSI (Supplemental Security Income, paid to disabled and elderly) understanding in part that if you're an elderly person on SSI, you're going to spend every dime you get as fast as it comes in because you're living paycheck to paycheck to paycheck. But California is cutting payments to SSI. So California is cancelling out a part of the program that will actually stimulate the economy. I think that's deeply troubling, especially because California is such a large part of the nation. If we undermine the federal stimulus efforts in California, it's going to be that much harder to get the whole country going again.

So what do you think the impact of the stimulus plan will be?

There are some good things in there. It's an interesting structure (in the middle-class tax cuts) to give people a little bit in each paycheck rather than one big check. Remember, when people got one big check the last time (in the 2008 stimulus package), they saved it. That was good for families, bad for the economy. The jury is still out as to whether this new approach will work or not. But even here, some of that's going to be wiped out by some of the state changes.

It's often suggested that part of the fiscal problems are the benefits paid to public employees. Are people with traditional pension plans irrevocably resigned to losing their defined benefit plans over time?

If you are concerned about protecting those health and pension programs, you need to be very mindful of insuring that the state has strong growth ... state and local government have revenue sources that grow over time. When you are looking particularly at retiree health care costs, if you're concerned about preserving that, you need to be acutely aware of the need for a revenue base that will grow.



No Winners in Municipal Bankruptcies



Jack F. Williams
Professor of Law at
Georgia State University

As the Vallejo bankruptcy case has vividly illustrated, municipal bankruptcy is no easy out. It's costly, damaging and its consequences can be felt decades later. CPF interviewed Jack F. Williams, a national bankruptcy law expert and professor of law at Georgia State University, to shed some light on municipal bankruptcies.

Q: How common are municipal bankruptcies?

A: Not very common. Just a handful a year. However, Chapter 9 bankruptcies include other subdivisions of a state, including rural water and fire districts, school districts, etc. Still, since 1937 there have been fewer than 500 Chapter 9 bankruptcies.

Q: Is the Vallejo bankruptcy case setting a precedent? How unique is this situation?

A: Unique. First in your state. Also, since it appears that police and fire personnel make up some 80 percent of the budget, the City is using bankruptcy to force an unequal bargaining position on these professionals.

Q: What are the risks associated with local governments declaring bankruptcy?

A: They become a riskier borrower and may not be able to raise funds anymore through issuing bonds. They also may be perceived to be an unstable employer and may no longer attract top flight employees. This could actually jeopardize public safety.

Q: What's the potential impact of the Vallejo bankruptcy case on other municipalities and on the state?

A: This could start a rush to bankruptcy. Also, it will affect the rating of municipal bonds in your state.

Q: The City of Vallejo is asking the court to invalidate its labor contracts as part of the bankruptcy proceeding. If they are successful, what impact could this have on collective bargaining?

A: It will eviscerate it. Although bankruptcy is not consistent with good labor practices, it is often used to break unions.

Q: What kind of impact does a municipal bankruptcy have on the economy of a community?

A: Depends. We do not have a rich history of municipal bankruptcies. Thus, we cannot generalize. However, those businesses that provide goods and services to the City are hurt as well as those business that rely on the wage power of muni employees who will be fired, see their pay and benefits reduced, etc. Not a good thing.

Q: How should the taxpayers of Vallejo view their city's plight? Are they the victims of a failed economy or is this a failure of leadership?

A: Usually the two are not mutually exclusive. And taxpayers get the short end of the stick.



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CALIFORNIA PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS
1780 CREEKSIDE OAKS • SUITE 200
SACRAMENTO • CA • 95833
(916) 921-9111

www.cpf.org EMAIL: info@cpf.org

EDITOR: TRICIA TOMIYOSHI

GRAPHIC DESIGN MANAGER: SEANNE VILLANUEVA



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Retirement Security in an Insecure Economy



Pat Macht, CalPERS

In our current economic downturn, firefighters are worried about their pension and how their retirement has been affected. Many are employed by one of over 2,600 public agencies that make up the California Public Employee Retirement System (CalPERS). CPF interviewed Pat Macht, Assistant Executive Officer from CalPERS' Office of Public Affairs to answer some of your most frequently asked questions.

Q: How much of a hit has CalPERS taken during the past year?

A: In calendar year 2008, CalPERS' portfolio went from \$253.0 billion to \$183.3 billion. The current value (as of March 4, 2009) is \$162.2 billion.

Q: How does CalPERS plan to recoup these losses?

A: By following the long-term portfolio diversification strategy that has enabled us to achieve a 20-year annualized return of 9.9 percent through June 30, 2008. We're fine-tuning our strategies and tactics within our five asset classes continuously, using our market cash advantage as a big fund to go bargain-hunting, and by taking a long-range rather than short-term perspective in the financial markets.

We are big enough, have some of the best investment minds in the business, the right tools, and a 77-year track record to stay on course whether markets are up or down.

Q: How is CalPERS protecting its investments from the current market downturn?

A: Certainly we and all other investors face a formidable challenge in today's markets, which have brought significant on-paper portfolio losses in every sector. In response, we are reviewing our asset allocation strategy. That's how we divide up the investment pie (see chart). We're also taking steps to realign our external managers with CalPERS' goals to maximize risk-adjusted investment returns and minimize employer contribution rate increases. We're collaborating with other pension funds and institutional investors to advocate major financial reforms to federal policymakers and regulators and protect investors from the kind of market meltdown that all of us have experienced in the past 18 months.

Q: Has the portfolio changed in the past year in response to the market?

A: Even before the stock market peaked in late October 2007, we had begun investing much less in stocks than our allocation target called for. We also were shifting more assets to our new inflation-linked class, and had several months earlier begun a comprehensive assessment of our real estate portfolio. The Board also plans a spring workshop to reassess our allocations. Market conditions have changed so significantly that assumptions we used for the last asset allocation of December 2007 need to be checked to ensure they are still valid.

Q: Will employer retirement contributions be raised? When? By how much?

A: It's likely that rates will eventually go up for employers, but not right away. For starters, there's a two-year

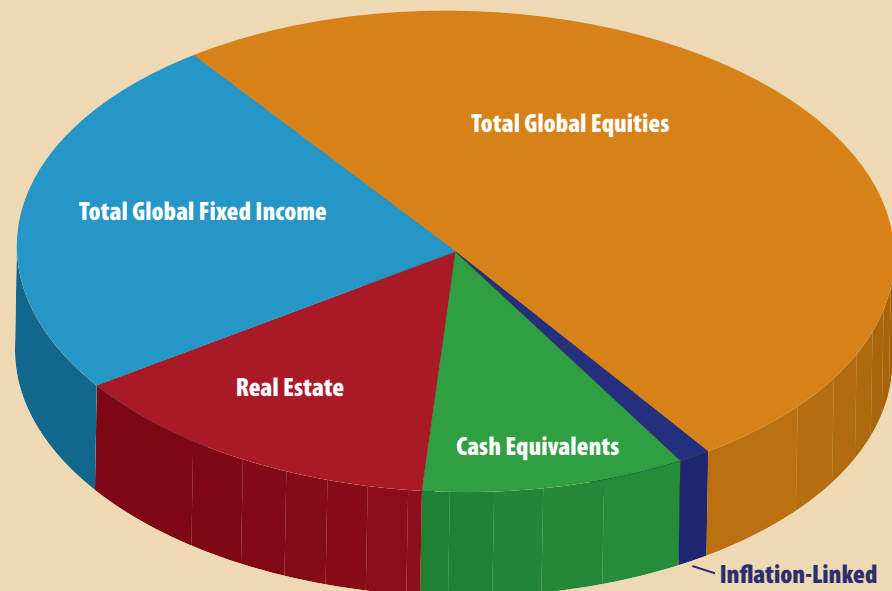
lag between investment performance for a given fiscal year and the impact of that performance on the rates of local agencies like cities, counties and special districts. There's a one-year lag for the State and contracting school districts. For most local employers, there will be no major change in employer rates for fiscal year 2009-2010. Those rates are already set. There also probably won't be any major change in employer rates for 2010-2011. When we finish the current fiscal year on June 30, 2009, we will use the investment return picture at that time in calculating employer rates for the 2010-2011 fiscal year for state and schools, and 2011-2012 for other public agencies. CalPERS has advised employers about possible scenarios.

Q: What do you see as the biggest challenges for CalPERS going forward?

A: To use our clout as a big investor to help stabilize the financial markets, a role that pension funds have historically done well; to collaborate with other investors in securing meaningful, effective regulatory reform that will enhance rather than hinder the health of the markets; and to do all we can with our own investment programs to maximize returns and restrain pressure on our members and employers.

To learn more about CalPERS, including all you care to know about the economy and your retirement, go to www.calpers.ca.gov.

CalPERS Investment Portfolio Breakdown (as of 12-31-08)



	Market Value (in billions)	Percentage
Total Global Equities	\$98.8	53.9%
Total Global Fixed Income	\$44.6	24.3%
Real Estate	\$21.1	11.5%
Cash Equivalents	\$15.2	8.3%
Inflation-Linked*	\$3.6	2.0%
Total Fund*	\$183.3	100.0%

*Inflation-linked assets include commodities, infrastructure, forestland and inflation-linked bonds, which are aimed at generating consistent performance independent of the public stock market's swings.

Local 3523 and the 'Tripod Of Success'

By Erik S. Baskin

Often times we all hear about the importance of the union, the importance of the brotherhood and the importance of becoming politically active. Never in the history of the **San Luis Obispo City Firefighters Local 3523** was that more evident than Tuesday, March 3rd at the local City Council meeting, and Agenda Item B-4 – "Options as Relates to Binding Arbitration."

Back in 2000, after many years of failed negotiations and lack of concern regarding our safety, we joined our local police officers association to overwhelmingly win a charter amendment implementing full-scope binding arbitration for public safety.

Eight years later, the POA won a significant retroactive pay increase as part of a 2008 arbitration settlement. Even though they had won on 15 of the other issues, the San Luis Obispo City Council (whom Local 3523 had helped elect) launched a vicious attack. With the backing of the local Chamber of Commerce, council members sought to blame public safety for the city's budget problems and targeted the repeal of binding arbitration (which, again, passed with 60 percent support).

Re-engaging our successful political coalition, Local 3523 and the POA agreed to support some new faces in upcoming council races, targeting an incumbent for the first time. With well-qualified candidates to support, we campaigned like never before. Using material produced by CPF's **Firefighters Print & Design**, we walked precincts and eventually hit almost every house in the city. Working again with our POA, we also aired radio commercials. Election Day, both our candidates won, marking the first time in the history of San Luis Obispo that an incumbent council member had lost an election.

You'd think the council would get the message, but some didn't want to let it die, and whispers started of a council move to repeal binding arbitration. With two solid votes and the election still in their minds, the effort fizzled in December, but at a "goals setting" workshop, the issue was calendared for March 3, 2009. The showdown was set.

That's when we built our "Tripod of Success."

We started with the most important political base – our membership. At a mandatory union meeting, we explained binding arbitration, why

it mattered and what could be lost. The discussion was open, and very positive. With our members behind us, we submitted an opinion piece on binding arbitration to our local newspaper and began meeting with the council in hopes of educating them on the issue.

Our second step was to build labor support. We started with all the CPF locals in the tri-county area and our **CPF 2nd District Vice President Chris Mahon**. Then we reached out to our partners in labor – the teachers, the nurses, the building trades. All would be valuable allies and all were eager to help. Working with CPF, we developed a support letter that all of these organizations signed and sent to City Hall.

Third, we reached out to our political friends, like State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell, Congresswoman Lois Capps, Assemblyman Pedro Nava, and Senator Abel Maldonado. On a local level, we got our County Board of Supervisors involved making calls on our behalf.

Member support ... labor support ... political support. Three sturdy legs. The "Tripod of Success."

With our foundation secure, we blitzed the public, pressing our case in every blog item and newspaper article. Five days out from the March 3rd meeting, we began sending recorded messages urging people to contact the council and support firefighters. And when a former union member with an ax to grind attacked us in the paper, **Los Angeles County Firefighters President Dave Gillotte** wrote a forceful response that was in our local paper the morning of the Council meeting. At the same time, we remained in touch with our council, assuring them we'd be there to help get through the fiscal crisis, but not if it meant fighting over arbitration.

When "D-Day" arrived, we invaded. Our members showed up en masse at the March 3rd meeting, as did

that of the POA. Members from Ventura County, Santa Barbara City and Arroyo Grande also were there, as were supporters from all of our labor coalition. I also brought letters from four other CPF locals, from as far away as Long Beach. Our political allies came through as well: Superintendent O'Connell and Assemblyman Nava spoke personally on our behalf, and Representative Capps and Senator Maldonado sent support letters.

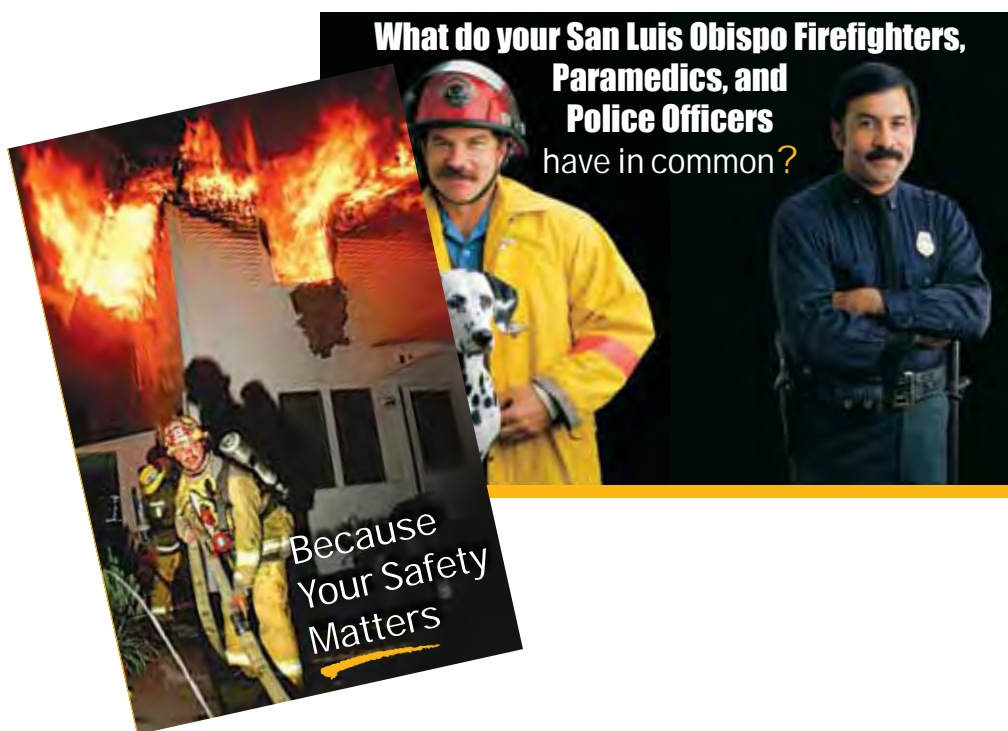
Politics being what they are, there was a lot of posturing, but when it was all over, the council voted 4-to-1 against any action. Binding arbitration was safe.

It was a glorious night, but an instructive one as well. The **IAFF** and CPF continually tell us to get involved and become politically active. Well, this is proof positive that it pays off. It shows that when you build your foundation – strong member support, strong coalitions and potent political action – you can accomplish anything. **CPF President Lou Paulson**, the staff and all of our brothers and sisters throughout the state helped us make this a success. The campaign brought out the spirit of what it means to be a part of our great union and our profession.

Throughout the past eight months, we have lived by one motto and I would like to leave it with you today. I believe it speaks for itself:

**UNITED WE STAND WITH
ONE VISION AND
ONE VOICE!**

Erik S. Baskin is president of San Luis Obispo City Firefighters, Local 3523. If you have a story of political success you'd like to share with your brothers and sisters, send it to us at info@cpf.org.



Fighting Back

Protecting Your Priorities In Hard Times



A Message From Your Local Firefighters

Dear Neighbors

As your first responders, we see the impact of these hard economic times every day. We stand ready to do our part to get through the economic crisis. But when it comes to your safety, our duty is clear.

Your elected officials are working behind the scenes to dramatically reduce your fire and ambulance protection. What does it mean?

Longer response times: When lives are on the line, seconds count. Longer response times are the difference between life and death.

Fewer firefighters on the street: The longer we have to wait for more units, the more likely you could lose your home in a fire.

Higher insurance costs: Fewer firefighters and EMTs increase your insurance risk, and possibly your rates.

Increased risk ... to you and to your first responders.

Even in tough times, government's first responsibility is the safety of its citizens. We believe these proposals put your safety at risk.

Please Support Your Firefighters and Say **NO to Risky Public Safety Cuts!**

Get informed ... at www.localfirefighters.org or by calling us at (310) 555-1212

Get involved ... by joining us at the next City Council meeting.

Get in touch ... with your elected officials and tell them "I Support Our Firefighters."

We're all in this together. Please help us insure your safety.

Timmy Smith
President, Your Local Firefighters



WWW.LOCALFIREFIGHTERS.ORG

There is little doubt that the economic downturn has already taken its toll on local public safety. Every region of the state has seen its tax base shrink, and many local governments are being forced to reluctantly consider cutting public safety services.

For many local elected officials, this is a difficult and painful decision. But there are many others who are willingly ... sometimes even gleefully ... swinging the budget ax at the fire service.

City managers who have long chafed at the support firefighters receive in the public eye have discovered that the bad economy is a great pretext for exacting contract concessions. Some of their tactics:

- Pit unions against each other (firefighters vs. police, firefighters vs. janitors, etc.);
- Going after labor contracts and deliberately violating MOUs;
- Imposing cuts with limited input from the public;
- Threatening bankruptcy and other apocalyptic scare tactics.

For firefighters, there are certain priorities that transcend hard times: staffing, response times, fair pay, health care and retirement security. Keeping to these core principles and staying focused on your advantages as public safety professionals will help you survive and win when your adversaries go on the attack.

Working For You ... California Professional Firefighters

Helping your local union protect what you have earned is the focus of CPF's political action efforts, both in Sacramento and at the local level. Working with your local union, CPF provides a range of tools to insure that your priorities are the public's priorities.

- **Grassroots toolkit:** CPF's "Fighting Back" program, distributed to local leadership, provides a "soup to nuts" strategic plan for protecting your priorities, as well as resources you can use to help make your case for protecting staffing, stations and your safety on the job.

- **CPF Media Solutions:** A package of public service announcements, high-impact commercials and other video material designed to boost your image and heighten public awareness. You can see a sample of these messages by checking the Media Gallery at www.cpf.org.

- **Firefighters Print & Design:** A full-service union print shop that can produce everything from a simple flyer and door hanger to sophisticated, targeted mail. Firefighters Print & Design's guiding mission is to serve your interests.
- **Custom Services:** CPF's political action and communications departments give your leadership access to professional consulting services, whether it's dealing with a local media issue or advice on a ballot campaign.

Working For You ... Your Local Union

As CPF works for you at the state level, it is your local that is standing on the front lines for you where it matters most – in the halls of your local government.

Whether it's negotiating to save jobs or organizing precinct walks and city council presentations, your local union is your most visible and forceful advocate – especially when things get nasty.

As union members, you have a vital role in protecting your hard-earned staffing and benefits. To play your part, you need to participate:

- **Attend union meetings:** It's still the best way to keep informed.
- **Stay informed:** If your local has a Web site, keep checking. If they have an e-mail list, get on it.
- **Participate in charitable activities:** Whether it's MDA Fill the Boot, a school spaghetti feed or a public safety fair, your participation helps reinforce the notion that firefighters are "on your side."

Most importantly, when your union needs a turnout to attend a meeting, hand out flyers, *get involved*. It's your future that is at stake ... and the future belongs to those who show up.



LETTERS

The following is a letter from Dallas Jones's family who requested that it be published.

When our beloved Dallas Jones lost his battle with cancer, the California fire service lost one of its titans and we lost a devoted husband, father and grandfather.

Speaking for his family, I wanted to take a moment to thank the firefighter community for the outpouring of support everyone has shown our family. It has simply overwhelmed us, and helped us through Dallas's battle with cancer and during the difficult times afterward.

Dallas's friends at **California Professional Firefighters** were a constant source of support throughout his illness. When he was weak from the fight, CPF had his back, insuring that he was able to meet his responsibilities as CPF Secretary-Treasurer. CPF sent food, flowers and personal support throughout his illness and afterward. CPF helped make Dallas's memorial service a special event, offering organizational support and producing a moving tribute book and video.

The **Pipes and Drums of California Professional Firefighters** provided a moving musical link to the most sacred fire service traditions.

The California Firefighters Memorial Ceremony, held this past fall in Sacramento, was very important to us. The ceremony helped us to closure, as it has done for so many other families of fallen firefighters, and we all felt so proud to have Dallas honored on its Memorial Wall.

As a family, we would also like to give our special thanks to the men and women of **Los Angeles County Firefighters, Local 1014**, Dallas's home local. **Local 1014 President Dave Gilotte** worked tirelessly to arrange full fire service honors, which included an engine procession and a multi agency, multi helicopter fly-over at the gravesite. The Executive Board showed their dedication and loyalty to Dallas. **Andy Doyle**, one of the directors of Local 1014, who is also a very close member of our family, arranged every detail for us throughout the memorial. Even though he was grieving with our family, he was strong enough to overcome his personal feelings and

coordinate a beautiful memorial service to honor Dallas.

There were so many other kindnesses large and small for which we are grateful. Through Mike Conti's efforts, Local 1014 located Dallas's original engine, which, with the help of firefighters at Station 17 and throughout the area, was restored and displayed at Dallas's memorial reception. The Firefighter Cancer Support Network, led by L.A. County firefighter Mike Dubron, was especially comforting during this time – they were willing to help us with every little thing we needed. L.A. County Fire Chaplain Scott Zibandin sacrificed his time to comfort our family. And Dallas's colleagues James Lee Witt and Mark Ghilarducci offered meaningful personal and public tributes, as well as providing a link with his career at OES.

It was a sad and trying time for us, but the cards, prayers, and well wishes we received from across the country truly boosted our spirits. And as they do every day for our citizens, firefighters answered the call.

The touching tributes to Dallas have been astonishing. We all felt so honored that so many people had uplifting stories



to share about my husband, our dad, and our grandfather. We all miss him terribly, but my family and I will be forever thankful to each person who has helped us remember the good and fun memories we had with Dallas.

To all of you, wherever you are, may God keep you safe and thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

**Love,
Brian and Family, Michael and Family, Anadallas and Lilly Jones**

CPF Introduces William 'Dallas' Jones Cancer Presumption Act of 2009

AB 128 eliminates strict time limit on presumption for job-related cancer

California has always been at the forefront of recognizing the health impacts of firefighters' day-to-day exposure to cancer-causing chemicals. This year, California again moves to expand the vital cancer presumption, and is doing so in honor of one of its most passionate advocates.

CPF-sponsored legislation – AB 128 by Assemblymember Joseph Coto (D-San Jose) – would extend the current five-year limit on presumptive claims for job-related cancer, replacing it with a formula based on years of service. The **William "Dallas" Jones Cancer Presumption Act of 2009** honors the memory of CPF Secretary-Treasurer **Dallas Jones**, who died of job-related cancer in 2008.

"Dallas was one of the most determined and eloquent advocates on behalf of firefighters stricken with cancer or other

job-related illnesses," said **CPF President Lou Paulson**. "It is singularly appropriate that he be honored as we fight for this vital reform."

Current law provides a rebuttable workers' compensation presumption when a firefighter or police officer develops cancer either on the job or

up to five years after their last day of service. Since the original statute was passed over two decades ago, research and anecdotal data reveal that some industrially-caused cancers show up well beyond the five-year max. Several of the cancers most closely associated with firefighters have latency periods that extend well past five years – sometimes

as long as three or four decades.

"Job-related cancer doesn't follow the calendar," said President Paulson. "In many cases, a cancer that emerges after decades on the job can be traced back to a single call, or a single incident."

AB 128 eliminates the existing public safety officer's cancer presumption 60-month statute of limitations and instead provides one year for each year of service worked. In doing so, AB 128 more accurately reflects the risk to those types of job-related cancers that are contracted by firefighters and other public safety personnel.

For more than three decades, Dallas Jones served his brothers and sisters on the front lines. Dallas, who died last year of job-related cancer, served two tours as CPF Secretary-Treasurer. He was a long-time president of Los Angeles County Firefighters Local 1014 and served as state OES Director from 1999 to 2004.



Local Leadership Presses First Responder Issues in Sacramento

Some 150 CPF local affiliate leaders brought the message from the front lines directly in the halls of the State Capitol at CPF's **Daniel A. Terry Legislative Conference**.

The two-day conference brought lawmakers face-to-face with firefighters from their home districts, offering an opportunity for them to directly hear about the impact their actions will have on front line first responders.

Well over half of the Legislature, Republicans and Democrats, got to hear the firefighter message directly, either from office visits from their hometown firefighters or at a special legislative reception.

"It's really important for us to get that face-to-face contact, so that they know that the people back in the district are paying attention and care about these issues," said **Erik Baskin**, president of **San Luis Obispo Firefighters**.

Highlights of the conference included:

- Speeches from three of the four top legislative leaders – Assembly Speaker Karen Bass, Senate President Darrell Steinberg, and Assembly GOP Leader Mike Villines;

- Special presentations on lobbying and the CPF Legislative Agenda;
- A special presentation on the state's economy, featuring top line experts on national, state and local government principles;
- A "firehouse breakfast" with the state's constitutional officers.

"As hard as our legislative team works to promote firefighter-friendly policies, nothing beats hearing about it directly from the district," said **CPF President Lou Paulson**.

The conference is held every two years, usually in the spring as committee hearings begin to ramp up for the new session. Many locals joined forces to lobby specific legislators on CPF priority legislation.

In 2004, the conference was re-named the Daniel A. Terry Legislative Conference to honor **CPF President-Emeritus Dan Terry**, whose three decades of leadership produced groundbreaking legislative accomplishments ranging from firefighter presumptions to binding arbitration to the **California Firefighters Memorial**.



Santa Clara County and City, Palo Alto, San Jose and Livermore-Pleasanton with Assemblymember Alberto Torrico



Assembly GOP Leader Mike Villines meets with **Fresno City Firefighters Gerald Smith and "Sawyer" Ngo**

The 2009 CPF Legislative Agenda

CPF Bills Push Cancer Presumption, New Engines and Employer Accountability

On the heels of one of the most successful legislative sessions in its history, **California Professional Firefighters** is moving forward with an aggressive package of pro-firefighter reforms for 2009.

AB 128 (Coto) – William Dallas Jones Cancer Presumption Act of 2009

Eliminates the existing statute of limitations for public safety cancer presumptions currently capped at five years beyond a firefighter's last day of service, in favor of expanding it to one year for each year of service. (See story on page 10)

AB 155 (Mendoza) – Municipal Bankruptcies

Imposes accountability on municipal bankruptcy filings by requiring authorization of state Debt and Investment Commission prior to bankruptcy declaration.

SB 5 (Maldonado) – Fire-Based Bomb Technicians

Authorizes a feasibility study on whether to add fire-based certified bomb technicians to the peace officers classification.

AB 1128 (Brownley) – Fire Engines

Allocates federal funds to acquire an additional 131 fire engines over the course of the next three fiscal years for use by departments statewide, implementing Blue Ribbon Commission findings.

AB 186 (DeSaulnier) – Workers Comp: Predesignation

Eliminates the existing December 31, 2009 sunset on the right of industrially injured workers, including firefighters to pre-designate their treating physicians for workers' compensation purposes.

AB 1227 (Feuer) – 4850 Time

Clarifies that 4850 time applies to all firefighters, regardless of the retirement system in which they are members.

AB 104 (Calderon) – HELPS Clarification

Conforms state law to the federal HELPS provisions by waiving 2.5 percent early withdrawal penalty taxes (currently imposed on certain public safety pension distributions) and tax penalties on governmental retirement plan distributions that are made in conjunction with the health and long-term care insurance.

ACA 9 (Huffman) – Local Accountability

Amends state constitution to change the two-thirds voter-approval requirement for special taxes and new bonded indebtedness to 55 percent.

AJR 10 (Torlakson) – Government Pension Offset

Urges Congress and the president to enact the Social Security Fairness Act of 2009, which would repeal the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision from the Social Security Act.

CA Firefighters Memorial Resolution (Huber)

Proclaims Saturday, October 17, 2009 as California Firefighters Memorial Day.

Firefighters and the Federal Stimulus Plan

With the shadow of another difficult fire season looming over California, a silver lining may be shining our way, courtesy of the federal stimulus plan.

The massive American Recovery and Reinvestment Act promises at least \$30 billion, and possibly as much as \$80 billion in additional revenue for a range of state and local services. At least one pot of money is specifically earmarked for public safety, and a range of educational, environmental and energy dollars could also be made available to help keep the effects of the state's fiscal meltdown at bay.

California Professional Firefighters is aggressively moving to secure sizeable portions of the stimulus money for long-unmet needs.

- **Staffing and Fire Stations** -- CPF has proposed a framework that would allow fire agencies to apply for multi-year grants for staffing. Stimulus dollars earmarked for energy efficiency could be used to upgrade outdated fire stations. We believe up to \$250 million could be made available for these purposes.
- **Apparatus** – CPF has proposed a \$32 million allocation to finance the purchase of 131 wildland firefighting engines, as proposed by the state Blue Ribbon Task Force (see AB 1128).
- **Training** -- \$15 million to supplement firefighter apprenticeship training through the groundbreaking labor-management partnership, the **California Fire Fighter Joint Apprenticeship Committee**.

CPF's legislative team is closely tracking the legislative process to insure that funding intended to bolster our critical first responder needs isn't siphoned away to other priorities.

To learn more about the stimulus money, check out the Issues and Legislation page at www.cpf.org.

California Fire Service Rejects "STAY AND DEFEND" Wildland Fire Strategy

The terrifying scene was all too familiar ... homeowners fleeing a firestorm whipped by high winds, hot temperatures and dry brush. More than 1,000 homes destroyed, over a million acres burned.

For all the world, the devastating fires that raged through Australia this January looked a lot like any of the three devastating firestorms that have assaulted Californians in the last half-decade. But when the fires died down, there was one important difference: More than 200 people dead – nearly 10 times the total loss of life in all three of California's firestorms.

Why did so many die in an area with a fraction of California's population density? Many are pointing the finger at Australia's "Leave Early or Stay and Defend" policy.

Residents armed with garden hoses were ill-equipped to protect

themselves against the ravaging blazes that tore through towns and were fanned by hot winds and drought conditions. Many residents were found charred in their cars as they attempted to escape down blinding smoke-filled streets. Others met their fate, trapped in their homes when the firestorm raged through and set neighborhoods alight.

In one particularly hard-hit province -- Victoria -- the common practice of creating defensible space is illegal, increasing the risk potential even more.

Under pressure from a few angry homeowners and a PR blitz by fire-service privateers, a few California departments last year began studying the "Stay and Defend" option. But in the face of this disaster, the California fire service has come together to say no.

"The guiding principle of California's approach remains consistent and unwavering: **Prepare** your property, **leave** early, and **follow** all evacuation orders," were the words of a statement issued by FIRESCOPE.

The statement, drafted collaboratively by FIRESCOPE chiefs and **California Professional Firefighters**, concludes that any consideration of "Stay and Defend" would be irresponsible, and urges renewed commitment to the basics – defensible space, fire-safe building materials and, especially, early evacuation.

"Sadly, we are all too familiar with Australia-type firestorms in our state," said **CPF President Lou Paulson**. "Leaving early is the only rational life-saving alternative. The possibilities for error are too high. The stakes are too great. And the last thing that California needs is a repeat of Australia's tragedy."



ABOVE: A fire truck moves away from out-of-control flames, part of a wildfire about 78 miles west of Melbourne, Australia.

RIGHT: The ruins of buildings and vehicles lie on charred land at Kinglake, northeast of Melbourne, Australia.



HEALTH AND SAFETY

Cyanide Poisoning: A Silent Threat to Firefighters

Routine Exposure to Cyanide Can Lead to Acute and Chronic Illness



After a series of fires in Rhode Island, including an incident where a firefighter was successfully resuscitated after cardiac arrest, an investigation concluded that many firefighters had reported symptoms consistent with cyanide poisoning.

Plastics burn and cyanide is produced. The quantity of cyanide in smoke is greater than previously believed. The signs and symptoms of cyanide poisoning in firefighters

has gone unnoticed because they are similar to carbon monoxide poisoning.

The half-life of cyanide in the body is only about one hour, so the cyanide can clear before it can be detected. However, cyanide can cause cardiac arrhythmias and other medical conditions commonly experienced by firefighters. The effects of cyanide on the heart may show up days

to weeks after the exposure, even if the toxin is not detectable in the blood.

If you have been on the fire ground, and have experienced weakness, fatigue and headaches after the fire is extinguished, you may have been exposed to toxic levels of cyanide.

The complete report can be read on-line at <http://tinyurl.com/cfbrsg>

MDA's Fill the Boot Campaign Growing Strong, Despite Economic Woes

Firefighters attend MDA 'Boot Camp' to ensure another successful year

Fire departments from across the state came together to celebrate MDA's 2008 Fill the Boot accomplishments and to share best practices to ensure an even bigger and better 2009 effort.

CPF President Lou Paulson and **IAFF MDA National Director Ron Kuley** attended both events and encouraged firefighters to continue to support MDA and the Fill the Boot campaign. MDA thanks all who attended the annual MDA "Boot Camps" in Northern and Southern California and thanks Continental Airlines for awarding roundtrip tickets to the top raising departments throughout California.

"In this difficult economy, we can't necessarily promise to raise a certain dollar amount," said President Paulson. "But we will promise to stand by MDA and continue to do everything we can to raise money to find a cure for these terrible diseases."

In 2008, California firefighters raised \$1.8 million to support MDA in



CPF 5th District Vice President Mike Massone makes MDA Goodwill Ambassador Jordan Balla an honorary firefighter.

the fight against neuromuscular disease. At each event, firefighters set a 2009 goal of \$2.3 million. MDA California State Goodwill Ambassador Jordan Balla expressed her gratitude and called the firefighters her angels in disguise.

In these tough times, MDA recognizes the economic

challenges that we are all facing. For people and families affected by neuromuscular disease, the option of waiting for more favorable economic times to continue our research efforts is not an option. While most fundraising events are struggling to meet their budgetary goals, MDA has seen significant growth in its Fill the Boot campaign. People and corporations still want to give, but they just can't write the big checks like they used to. Fill the Boot gives them an opportunity to just give \$1, feel good about it, and still make a difference.

Thanks to the hard work of California firefighters, the families served by MDA have hope.



PERSONAL EXPOSURE REPORTING



Think you haven't been exposed?

www.peronline.org



California Fire Foundation Unveils its New Look

The **California Fire Foundation** has a new logo and will be redesigning its Web site. Please check back at www.cafirefoundation.org in the coming months to see how it looks. In addition to these branding efforts, the California Fire Foundation is working with **FireStar Productions** to create a "Thank you, California" commercial. This commercial

is designed with the intent to show California residents what the fire service has been able to do to honor, recognize and assist fallen firefighters, their families and their communities through the support of the public. Upon its April completion, this commercial will also be posted for your viewing on the California Fire Foundation Web site.

Up and Coming ...

Beginning in May, the California Fire Foundation will be starting a series of public service announcements on the topic of emergency preparedness for the elderly population. We will be reaching out to our members for support on the filming and distribution of this public service announcement. Please contact Foundation Director Vanessa Robinson at vrobinson@cpf.org if you are interested in helping out with this project.

Don't Forget ...

Many of you picked up copies of the California Fire Foundation's "Firefighters on Your Side" public service announcement campaign. This campaign was completed in 2008 with outreach materials in both English and Spanish. The intent of this project was to help our members reach out to parts of the community who have language barriers or who may fear public safety officials. We have DVDs of this PSA available for local use and can customize both the public service announcement and accompanying materials with your local logo. We can also assist you with resources to reach out to your local media outlets, schools and community groups. For more information on this campaign, please go to www.firefightersonyourside.org, or www.bomberosatulado.org. To order copies of the DVDs or written materials, please contact Vanessa Robinson at vrobinson@cpf.org.

Save the Date ...

The annual **California Firefighters Memorial** will be held on October 17, 2009. More information will be posted on the CPF Web site as the date gets closer. You may begin to register for rooms at the Sheraton Grand, Sacramento at (916) 447-1700. Please identify yourself as part of the California Professional Firefighters group to get a special rate. You may direct questions to Vanessa Robinson at vrobinson@cpf.org.



A still from "Firefighters on Your Side" public service announcement

Please join the CALIFORNIA FIRE FOUNDATION and CALIFORNIA PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS for the *California Firefighters Memorial*

SAVE THE DATE!



October 17th, 2009 • Capitol Park, Sacramento
<http://Memorial.CPF.org>

For Our Retirees

Social Security Fairness Act of 2009 Needs your Support



Representative Howard Berman

Important legislation moving through the U.S. Congress needs the support of California's retired firefighters.

H.R. 235 would fully repeal both the "Windfall Elimination Provision" and the "Government Pension Offset" under the current Social Security Act. It was introduced in the House by Rep. Howard Berman (CA-28).

The "Windfall Elimination Provision" (WEP) was enacted in 1983 as part of a large reform package designed to shore up the financing of the Social Security system. Its purpose was to remove a "windfall" for persons who spent some time in jobs not covered by Social Security (like public employees) and also worked other jobs where they paid Social Security taxes long enough to qualify for retirement benefits.

In other words, if you are a public safety member (active or retired) and at some point in your career contributed to Social Security thereby becoming eligible to receive benefits at age 62 or 65, your earned Social Security benefits can be reduced up to 60 percent!

Like the "Windfall Elimination Provision," the "Government Pension Offset" (GPO) was adopted in 1983 to shore up the finances of the Social Security trust fund.

The GPO reduces the spouse's or widow(er)'s benefit from Social Security by two-thirds of the monthly amount received by the government pension. This "offset" law was aimed at

cutting the benefits of spouses and widow(er)s who were also collecting a government pension.

In brief, this bill would repeal those current provisions of the law that reduces Social Security benefits for

many classes of rank and file public employees, teachers and specifically peace officers and firefighters who paid into Social Security and also receive a government pension. Meaning: you'll receive 100 percent of your earned Social Security benefits.

The importance of this bill can't be stressed enough. We strongly encourage both active and retired members to contact their U.S. Senators and House Representatives and urge their support and passage of H.R. 235.

Addresses for U.S. Senators

Senator Dianne Feinstein, 331 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510, www.feinstein.senate.gov. Phone: 202/224-3841.

Barbara Boxer, 112 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510, www.boxer.senate.gov. Phone: 202/224-3553.

Addresses for U.S. House of Representatives

To contact your U.S. Representative, you can call 202/224-3121, or go to their Web site: www.house.gov.

Your Online Fire Service Connection

Find it here ... find it fast ... find it FREE



The California Fire Department Directory is your up-to-date online resource for basic information about the fire service in California.

Complete: Current contact info, web addresses and even MACS designations

Up-To-Date: Directory is updated monthly

Searchable: Search by county, city or department name

Downloadable: Those who need it "on paper" can get a hard copy ad free!

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James Ritchey

Burbank Fire Fighters Local 778
Monte Osborn

Carlsbad Firefighters Association Local 3730
Richard Fisher

CDF Firefighters Local 2881
William Christen
Jack Consol, Jr.
Paul Graham
James Mortensen
Dennis O'Brien
Guylid Vincent

Contra Costa County Professional Firefighters Local 1230
Nils Anderson
William Cullen
Richard Del Fiorentino
Gerald Goss
Russell Greenlaw
Jeffrey Hansen
Michael Massone
Ronald Moomey
Michael Proudfoot
William Rabska
Richard Sukacz
Larry Tracey
Herman Walden
Jack Walker
Wayne Zimmerman

Davis Professional Firefighters Association Local 3494
Richard Jett

Edwards AFB Firefighters Local F 53
Thomas Van Trease

El Segundo Firefighters Association Local 3682
Gary Preston

Escondido Firefighters Local 3842
Michael Allen

Federal Firefighters, San Diego Local F 33
William Roy

Federal Fire Fighters Association Local F 85
William Harvey
Robert Trahan

Hayward Fire Fighters Local 1909
Richard Cordero

Kern County Fire Fighters Local 1301
William Cooper
Gary Frank
Don Hoffman
Steven Thompson
George Welch

Livermore-Pleasanton Firefighters Local 1974
Raybert Thornton, Jr.
William Walsh

Long Beach Firefighters Local 372
Rick DuRee
James Firth
Charles Pillsbury
Kenneth Wuchner

Los Angeles County Fire Fighters Local 1014
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As a member of the Callback Association, Gold and Silver Circle members participate at a higher level by supporting the California Professional Firefighters' Political Action Committee (PAC). These valuable contributions to the CPF's PAC help us to support legislative leaders and candidates who are sympathetic to the interests of our firefighters.

On behalf of the CPF Executive Board, a special thanks goes out to the following Callback members:

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