

FROM: THE CALIFORNIA FACULTY ASSOCIATION
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CFA HEADLINES

Oct. 19, 2004 • Weekly news digest from CFA

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*See back issues of CFA Headlines, sent each Tuesday, at <http://www.calfac.org/headlines.html>
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1 – WHY VOTE YES ON PROPOSITION 72

During the past few years news reports have been published about workers losing their health care benefits, about health insurance premiums skyrocketing, about millions of American workers going without health care because of its prohibitive costs.

This problem has become an epidemic in the United States. It's not just small business employees who are kept out of the medical insurance game due to high premiums; large corporations such as SBC — which reported a \$7.4 billion profit in 2003 — are passing the increased premium costs to their employees. Sometimes this costs the employee hundreds of dollars a month. Sometimes the benefit is eliminated altogether.

Last fall this was the issue between grocery workers and their Southern California supermarket conglomerates in the prolonged UFCW strike. This fall another battle is being waged between hotel workers in downtown San Francisco and their corporate employers. UNITE H.E.R.E. is currently on strike, hoping to return to the bargaining table to protect workers' health benefits.

This problem will continue to fester until the nation's policy toward health care is reformed. In the meantime, doctors, nurses, health care workers, employees, labor unions and other organizations are rallying behind Proposition 72, a measure on the Nov. 2 ballot, which would require employers with 50 or more employees to pay at least 80 percent of the cost of their workers' premiums. The measure would exempt 93 percent of employers in the state.

The premise of Prop. 72 is that health care is a human right, not a benefit, and the trend of the growing percentage of uninsured workers cannot continue. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, California families have seen their premiums increase by 70 percent in the last three years and are paying an average of \$2,452 a year for insurance.

The measure would also extend coverage to an estimated 1.1 million workers and their families, thus saving taxpayers money by keeping uninsured workers from resorting to the emergency room when something goes wrong.

At this stage, any California employee is vulnerable to losing health benefits. Prop 72 would protect existing employee benefits, ensuring that mid-size and large-scale employers will provide health insurance.

The measure would also benefit working CSU students, many of whom are not insured.

Prop 72's opponents, including McDonald's, Macy's and Wal-Mart, have funded a campaign to discredit the measure, claiming, among other things, it would introduce government-run health care. Prop 72 would be setting a precedent for just 7 percent of the largest employers to give their workers health insurance.

Prop 72's supporters state: "The stakes are nothing less than the future of health care...If the Health Insurance Act is re-affirmed, it will send a major signal nationally, that voters are demanding solutions to the health care crisis."

For more information on Prop 72, go to <http://www.yeson72.org>

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2 – SAN JOSE ASSEMBLY RACE HEATS UP

As the Nov. 2 election nears, CFA members are gearing up for targeted election campaigns, such as Assembly District 21 in San Jose.

There, CFA members and staff are organizing a four-day blitz to help education-friendly Ira Ruskin get elected to the seat vacated by Joe Simitian. The activities, which are being coordinated in part by the labor councils of San Mateo and

Santa Clara Counties, include precinct walking from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 30 in Los Altos; more precinct walking on Sunday, Oct. 31 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Get Out The Vote activities Nov. 1 and 2, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., respectively.

Volunteers will also be talking to voters about Proposition 72, which would extend employee health benefits.

The Assembly race between Ruskin and Republican challenger Steve Poizner, who has modeled his campaign after “moderate” Arnold Schwarzenegger’s gubernatorial bid, is one of the contests throughout the state targeted by Democrats and Republicans.

This seat includes San Jose State and has been traditionally held by a CSU-friendly Democrat. But with the Republicans vying to eat away at the Democratic majority in the Legislature and with the governor endorsing Ruskin’s opponent, CFA feels this district could be vulnerable.

“Ruskin has demonstrated support to higher education funding,” said CFA Interim Organizing Director, North, Susan Strubbe.

Ruskin, a Redwood City (San Mateo County) councilmember and former mayor, has worked to improve public education, protect the environment, create affordable housing, promote economic prosperity and defend women’s rights. CFA believes he would be an effective ally in the coming budget struggles.

His opponent, however, a high-tech entrepreneur and billionaire, has not announced his support of CFA’s set of funding priorities for the CSU, according to Strubbe, and advertised himself as a moderate though he has consistently sided with business interests in the past. “He is trying to position himself by covering up in traditional Democratic clothing,” she said.

For more information on Ruskin, visit <http://www.iraruskin.org/>

To get involved in the upcoming activities, contact the San Jose CFA chapter at (408) 924-6501.

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3 – CFA LENDS LA COUNTY FED A HAND

Last week, 17 CFA members, staff and students worked the phones to help the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor aid campaigns for statewide and local contests in the Nov. 2 election.

CFA's contingent was the largest of any union that worked the phone bank. Many CFA members have begun to take an active role in several races around the state, as this election is seen as the first step in a successful fight for the CSU budget.

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4 – L.A.-AREA CFA MEMBERS PREPARE FOR VICTORY 2004

CSU faculty members, student and staff will participate in a rally and precinct walk Oct. 23 in Long Beach to help the campaigns of candidates who have demonstrated support and commitment to the CSU.

Participants in the Victory 2004 Mobilization will join the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor for the action, scheduled from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Recreation Park, 4900 E. 7th St. in Long Beach.

More information on this event can be obtained on CFA's Web site at <http://www.calfac.org/Nov2Election.html> and also by contacting your campus CFA chapter <http://www.calfac.org/chapters.html>

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5 – CFA 61ST ASSEMBLY REPORT

About 120 CFA members and CFA staff gathered in Sacramento last weekend for the 61st Assembly and discussed issues facing the university and its faculty.

Assembly delegates representing all CSU campuses conducted a campaign analysis of "Save the CSU" budget campaign that restored \$40 million to the CSU budget and laid plans for bargaining and a budget effort next year.

Delegates passed a motion opposing the CSU policy on student fees and supporting a moratorium on student fee increases this year. Delegates also took issue with the CSU administration's decision to propose an overall budget increase for the CSU only equal in line with the budget compact negotiated last year between the administration and the governor.

"After defending their role in the compact by arguing it was only a floor and a higher amount is still negotiable and quite probable, they are entering the next round of talks with the governor asking for the floor," said CFA General Manager Bob Muscat. "It is a foolish strategy and creates a completely false impression of what is needed to rebuild the CSU. This administration is like a dead weight around our necks. All they do is make things more difficult."

Two key legislators spoke to delegates during the weekend. Assembly Majority Leader Dario Frommer and Joint Senate-Assembly Legislative Audit Committee Chair Wilma Chan both demonstrated a deep knowledge of the needs of the CSU and an even deeper understanding of the role the CSU plays in the lives of California working families.

Delegates also passed resolutions that included the endorsement of an AAUP policy protecting contingent faculty and academic freedom.

The resolution recognized that the over-reliance on contingent faculty appointments has resulted in a fragmentation and destabilization of faculty work and has put academic freedom at risk. It also recognized that contingent faculty often lack job security and therefore are excluded from essential governance, curriculum and scholarship work, which has weakened the power of the faculty as a whole.

AAUP's "Contingent Appointments and the Academic Profession" policy statement examines these issues, and is available online at <http://www.aaup.org>

The Assembly also passed a resolution supporting CSU San Marcos students and faculty members who challenged the campus administration's recent decision to cancel a scheduled appearance of filmmaker Michael Moore. The incident sparked a debate on and off campus about academic freedom, free speech and using public education funds to bring a politicized speaker to campus.

In the resolution, CFA recommends that the statewide Academic Senate take an active part in challenging the campus administration's decision to cancel Moore's appearance and that the CSU chancellor issue CSUSM students and faculty an official explanation for the decision to ban the use of student activity fees "to fund a program to facilitate extracurricular free speech."

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6 – BARGAINING & BUDGET MEETINGS CONTINUE

CFA chapters at San Diego, Maritime, San Francisco and Humboldt will host Bargaining and Budget meetings this week, during which CFA statewide officers and Bargaining Team members will discuss important issues related to upcoming Unit 3 contract negotiations and budget cuts to the CSU.

The meetings have been held at campuses throughout October, and next week's will take place at Long Beach, Stanislaus and Hayward. All faculty members interested in bargaining issues are encouraged to attend.

The full meeting schedule is posted on CFA's Web site under Upcoming Events, <http://www.calfac.org/upcoming.html> Contact your campus chapter for further details.

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7 – COUNSELORS' HANDBOOK ON WEB

The recently compiled Counselors' Handbook, which includes information on benefits and a history of counselors in the CSU, is now available on the CFA Web site at <http://www.calfac.org/counselors.html>

The 22-page Handbook is a downloadable resource for counselors to use as a reference for bargaining and grievance issues. It also serves as a foundation for all counselors to understand their rights and the importance of being represented by CFA.

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8 – THE ULTIMATE IN MERIT PAY

CSU Stanislaus President Marvalene Hughes initiated a program earlier this month to reward faculty members with \$200,000 in awards, using money that was part of the \$40 million CSU budget restoration.

Faculty members in the Academic Senate voted 37-2 against the Excellence Initiative Awards given the dire budget situation, and CFA Chapter President John Sarraille said the decision was "catastrophically wrong-headed."

"We can't afford such frills," Sarraille told the Modesto Bee.

According to the Bee's report, Hughes is under pressure to distinguish the Central Valley campus. The awards program winners, selected by a 12-member committee, would devise the best ways for the university to distinguish itself. They would also receive up to \$50,000.

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9 – SJSU FUTURE PREZ AWAITS LUXURY CAR

While San Jose State University officials toy with the ideas of cutting class sections, laying off faculty and staff members and limiting enrollment and eliminating its football program, a \$40,650 Lexus SUV sits waiting for the next campus president.

The vehicle is just one of the luxurious perks San Jose State offers its campus president. This particular car, a memento from past-President Paul Yu, whose tenure lasted two weeks, is under the protective custody of university police until a new president is hired.

The university offers its president the option to pick a car for the university to buy or to receive a \$750 per month car stipend. When the president leaves, as Yu did, the car stays behind and becomes part of the campus motor pool.

According to the Chancellor's Office, the thinking behind these new cars is that a president should have a roomy, comfortable car to transport guests on campus tours or to fundraisers. Presidents don't have to pay for car insurance, maintenance or gasoline.

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10 – CALIFORNIA POLICY ISSUES CONFERENCE

CFA is co-sponsoring the Pat Brown Institute's 12th Annual California Policy Issues Conference Wednesday, Nov. 10 in Los Angeles.

Themed "Governing Through Initiatives: Implications for California's Infrastructure and Workforce," the Institute's event will include workshops and panels that include state lawmakers, local journalists and CSU faculty members.

CFA President John Travis, Vice President Lillian Taiz and Political Action/Legislative Committee Chair Susan Meisenhelder will be attending, and other CFA members and their students are encouraged to attend. The Institute provides sponsorships to cover the \$100 registration fee for students, and any professor who brings five students receives a sponsorship, as well.

The conference will begin at 8:45 a.m. at the Grand Ballroom at Hollywood and Highland in Hollywood. It is scheduled to conclude at 3:15 p.m.

Early registration deadline is Nov. 1.

For more information, go to the Institute's Web site at <http://www.patbrowninstitute.org/>

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