Note from the UTLA-R President
Healthcare costs: Some good news and some bad news.

By John Perez
UTLA-Retired President

HBC oversees millions in healthcare savings: Over the years I have reported to you that the Health Benefits Committee has done a great job of managing our health plans. On April 12 the district’s Risk Management Office reported that the HBC’s decision to institute a 50-state Medicare Advantage Plan for our members in the Anthem and the Health Net plans will save our plans about $30 million this calendar year! In addition the report said that the Employee Group Waiver Plan that was instituted by the HBC a number of years ago will save $150 million over a five-year period, and the Dependent Eligibility Audit has not spent on ineligible dependents. Over the years the HBC has been a tough negotiator with the various insurance and health companies and has kept down the annual increases in the costs of our plans. We should all thank our late president Helen Bernstein for getting Willie Brown to make the HBC part of the settlement in 1992-93 when we had to accept a 10% pay cut. Our thanks to the HBC for negotiating for our best interests.

Teacher “wage penalty” growing: The Economic Policy Institute just published its annual report on the teacher “wage penalty.” Since 1993 the “penalty” was 5.3%, but in 2018 the penalty was 21.4% Teachers’ benefit packages include defined benefit pensions and better health plans, which make up 29.1% of their total compensation as opposed to 21.5% for all other professionals. The better benefits that teachers receive reduced the overall compensation penalty to 13.3%, but that is the highest it has ever been. The total compensation penalty has been growing since 1993—it and was only 8.7% in 2010. EPI believes the wage penalty of 21.4% is one reason why the country has a teacher shortage. If college students know they can make 21.4% more in something other than teaching, why become a teacher? Why indeed?

Middle class hit by healthcare costs: On Cinco de Mayo the L.A. Times ran two front-page articles on how high-deductible plans are hurting middle-class families who are having trouble paying for the medical care they and their families need. In 2013 the right to choose the doctor one wanted and the benefits that plans offered were more important than the cost. The Times found that today, the deductible, premiums and copays are more important than choosing a doctor or the benefits a plan has. Because the U.S. is one of the few industrialized countries without a national health service, the cost of medical care in our country is twice as expensive as it is in Canada and the European countries that have national health plans. What retired LAUSD educators have—

political power will help protect our health-care: In 2020, our health benefits are back up for negotiation. Who sits on the school board will have a major impact. We’ve seen charter board members like Nick Melvoin target our healthcare, wanting to reduce benefits by $400 million a year! Take $400 million out of the $1 billion the district pays to keep us and our active colleagues healthy, and we will be like the people in the Times article, choosing between having dinner or paying for medicines and treatments we need. This is why I have been pushing PACE membership. Only by fully funding anti-charter school board candidates like Jackie Goldberg can you and UTLA protect our benefits. If you have not joined PACE, please send in that PACE card we sent you. If you have misplaced it, send me your name by email, and we will get you another one.

The Educator Due Process Advocacy Committee is here to help

The Educator Due Process Advocacy Committee is for you if . . .

• you have received your first Below Standard Evaluation of your career.
• you have been housed for an allegation.
• you have been placed in PAR.
• you feel you have been unfairly targeted due to your age.
• you are a union steward and feel retaliated against.
• you have a second CPES observer with your principal in your classroom.
• you are receiving conference memos and threats of discipline or dismissal.
• you have been displaced for more than two years and cannot get a permanent assignment.
• your UTLA area representative is your first point of contact at UTLA when any of the above occurs.

Some things that UTLA members may not be aware of: Teachers who run afoul of their administrators no longer get sent to downtown to be “housed.” Instead, every day between 8 a.m. and 2:45 p.m., they’re restricted to their own houses and obligated to call in to the district twice daily. They’re paid their regular salaries, but they’re forbidden all contact with their schools, which can make mounting a defense difficult. In the meantime, district personnel investigate the cases of these teachers. Housed teachers are not kept informed of the status of these investigations. No formal hearing takes place until the district reaches its verdict, so accused teachers have no chance to influence the process.

There has been a very aggressive attack on public school teachers since the passing of AB 215 in 2014, which streamlined the dismissal process.

UTLA’s Educator Due Process Advocacy Committee meets monthly at the UTLA building (3303 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90010) to support teachers who want to learn more. The committee is a clearing house of information sought by its members. The next meeting will be June 5, 2019, from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. The room will be posted in the UTLA Lobby.

If you’ve been recently removed from the classroom, please contact Carl Joseph (213-368-6234, cjoseph@utla.net), representation coordinator and housed teachers representative at UTLA.

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