

President's Message 11-18 to 11-22

CVT Update

On the 7th, I met with Elizabeth Perez, a representative from our health care trust, California's Valued Trust. Health Care is such an important part of MUSD's compensation package that I want to keep you informed. Recall that my reason for meeting with Elizabeth was to find ways to keep our monthly contribution to health care at \$50. I wanted to find out that, if by offering a wider variety of health care plans, MEA could help the MUSD reduce health care costs. I also wanted to learn more about our relationship with CVT, specifically because the District has expressed interest in moving from CVT to another trust. Why would the District go through the hassle of moving to another trust? The answer is clear: CVT offers more expensive rates for retired than they do for active employees. However, many of our retirees are aging out and are therefore costing the district less each year. I will refrain from telling the long story. Instead, in short, **MEA and CSEA's contract lists CVT as our health care provider**. There will be no change in our health care trust without negotiation, consent, and a majority vote.

Here's a few things I discovered:

- Elizabeth and CVT will research the cost benefit to providing more plans for MUSD (both more robust and less robust plans)
- CVT administrates COBRA for no cost
- CVT has wellness scholarships up to \$500 that contribute to District payment to CVT
- MEA can negotiate more plans for its members even if classified and management do not
- CVT offers one maximum for its deductible (it combines prescriptions and care); SCIC does not
- The District can contribute to a health care account that can be used to bankroll health care benefits if a rainy day arrives
- This year CVT will offer an *opt out* charge of \$836 a month. Here's how the *opt out* works: if a member has insurance coverage from a spouse or another source, the member can choose not to have coverage. CVT would then charge the District \$836 for the member not to have coverage. Sounds like a rip-off. It is and it isn't. The way CVT and other trusts work is that by pooling subscriptions, they can keep costs to individual plans. The District will have to pay CVT for each member who does not use their product at a rate that is considerably less than what it costs to insure that member. For example, most MEA folks use Blue Shield's PPO (CVT Plan 8B). The PPO costs the District \$1344 a month. An opt-out provision would save the District about \$500 a month or \$5000 a year.

Health care is more complicated than it is expensive. And it is really expensive. MEA is taking the lead in guaranteeing a continued tradition of providing the best insurance benefits in the Tri-Counties. I've learned from the best, Richard Gillis. When it comes to health care benefits, it takes a blend of gumption and hard work to make take care of our members and our families.

Bargaining

Today is MEA's turn to present contract language concerning school counselor's working conditions. This back and forth will continue for a while. The process is natural as MEA and the District attempt to

establish a codification, a baseline, a normal for school counseling duties. There will be no immediate gratification; it's going to take a while. Also on the bargaining agenda is most of Article III: Working Hours. Of note, we probably need to get 0 period in the contract due to new legislation. As always, MEA will vote on every and any change to our collective bargaining agreement.

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving with your families. You have certainly earned the break!

Brian