

# New Roads

FALL 2004

Published by The Contra Costa County Employees' Retirement Association  
[www.cccera.org](http://www.cccera.org)

*Set another place at the Board Room Table*

## CCCERA Board Welcomes New Retiree Representatives

CCCERA elections heralded changes in retiree representation, both in personnel and places at the board table. Helen Shea, who served for eighteen years as a trustee, chose not to run, vacating the retiree representative seat. AB1587 (effective January 2004) established an additional "alternate" retiree representative seat. By separate ballot, retired members chose Jerry Telles to fill the traditional seat and Sharon Naramore to become the new alternate representative.

Jerry Telles was a supervisor in the Probation Department until he retired in 1999. Currently, he is the chairperson for the Retirees' Support Group of Contra Costa County, a "grass roots" organization that works in non-partisan fashion to create solutions to issues important for all retirees.

"I became interested in serving CCCERA after attending meetings and observing the dynamics of the Board," says Telles. "Over time, I hope to protect and perhaps enhance benefits for retirees."

Sharon Naramore previously served on CCCERA's board from 1992 to 1998 as a general member representative. Her career with Contra Costa County spanned 34 years with the library system. As new alternate trustee she will follow the issues carefully, but vote only when the retiree representative is absent.

"My past board experience and knowledge of fiduciary responsibility will be an asset as I serve the fund," says Naramore. "I want to make sure our benefits are in place for current and future retirees."

Maria Theresa Viramontes was reappointed for her second term by the County Board of Supervisors. Viramontes is Executive Director of the Richmond Children's Foundation. Active members returned Brian Hast to his seat for another three years. Hast, who has served on the Board since 1998, is a county Deputy District Attorney.

Although retirement board members may be elected or appointed by certain groups within the association (general, safety, retirees), their mandate as trustees is the same: the security and integrity of the fund for all members: employers, employees and retirees alike.

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## Your Right To Privacy

There's been a lot of coverage lately in both the national and the local media about privacy. CCCERA wants retired members to be assured that their personal information is strictly confidential. The California Public Records Act requires government agencies to divulge many varieties of information, since taxpayers have a right to know where their money is being spent. But CCCERA members' individual records, benefits and pension amounts are outside the scope of these laws.

Likewise, we insist on certain requirements in order to safeguard your privacy. Changes to your account, such as beneficiary, tax withholding, and other requests for information must be made in writing, accompanied by your signature. Some forms must be notarized, such as the Spousal Waiver form.

Sometimes our safeguards might try your patience. But remember, they are for your benefit, to protect the privacy you deserve.

# Domestic Partner Legislation Puts Benefit Possibilities in Place

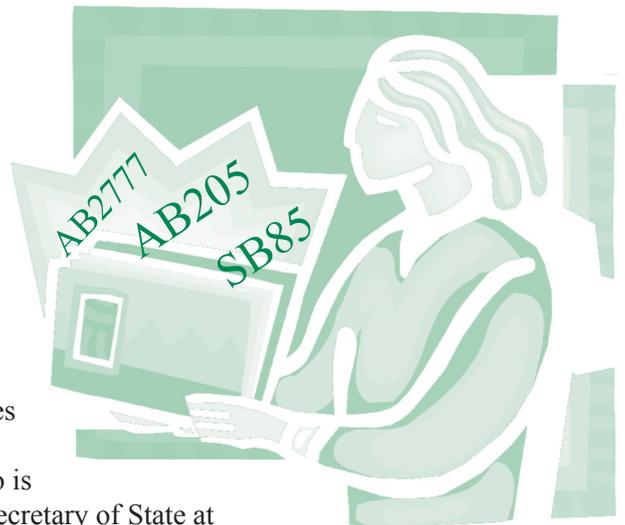
Effective January 2005, domestic partners *formally registered* with the State of California will be eligible for the same benefits and rights of survivorship currently available to spouses. The California Domestic Partner Rights and Responsibilities Act of 2003 amends a variety of statutes, including Section 297 of the Family Code, but **requirements for partners are very specific**. These new rights come with new responsibilities, *and* new paperwork that must be completed before domestic partner status can be recognized.

One important aspect for CCCERA members is Section 3B of the Family Code (297) which reads in part, “. . . persons of *opposite* sexes may not constitute a domestic partnership unless one or both of the persons are over the age of 62.” A domestic partner of a member who is retired will not qualify unless the partnership is registered with the Secretary of State at least one year prior to retirement, or registered **two years prior to death of the member**.

The surviving domestic partner must also be at least 55 years of age to receive a benefit continuance. These qualifications reflect Section 31760.1 of the ‘37 Act regarding survivor benefits: “No allowance, however, shall be paid under this section to a surviving spouse (domestic partner) unless he or she was married (registered) to the member at least one year prior to the date of his or her retirement.”

Section 31760.2 of the ‘37 Act is also affected by this new legislation. “No allowance may be paid . . . to a surviving spouse (domestic partner) unless he or she was married (registered with the Secretary of State) to the member at least two years prior to the date of death and has attained the age of 55 on or prior to the date of death.” Therefore, retirees wishing to qualify as Domestic Partners must be either 1) of opposite sexes and over the age of 62, *or* 2) of the same sex. *Both* categories must be registered with the Secretary of State at least two years prior to the member’s date of death to be eligible for a survivor benefit. (Same sex partners must meet the age 55 requirement, as well.)

For further information on these landmark amendments see [www.leginfo.ca.gov/](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/) and search by the bill numbers above, or the Secretary of State web site, ([www.ss.ca.gov/](http://www.ss.ca.gov/)) under the Domestic Partners Registry link. By January 2005 (the bill’s effective date) CCCERA will have the necessary tools in place to guide members interested in exploring these options for their partners and beneficiaries. You may also want to consult with an attorney or financial planner on individual situations.



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