



**Date:** June 5, 2015  
**To:** PECG Executive Board  
**From:** Los Angeles Section  
**Subject:** Quarterly Report



**Fellow Engineers - Greetings from Los Angeles!**

The first story on this quarterly report is on the Highway Workers Memorial event that honors the 183 employees (since 1921) who lost their lives on the job. 32 of these employees worked in District 7. This solemn event is held annually at Caltrans districts across the state for the past 25 years. It is a somber reminder that highway workers put their lives in danger everyday just by going to work. Highway and road construction is one of the most dangerous occupations in the United States. More than 1,000 Caltrans vehicles are hit on the state highways each year. Motorists are at high risk too,

with drivers and passengers accounting for 85 to 90 percent of the people who are killed in highway work zones. Most of these fatal crashes are rear-end collisions, with speeding, and aggressive and distracted driving being the most common factors.

This year’s local event was held in Camarillo at the Caltrans West Region Maintenance Office in Ventura, with speakers from Caltrans, CHP, Fire Department, the Operating Engineers Union, SEIU, CSEA and PECG. On behalf of PECG, LA Section president John Vassiliades (pictured to the right) thanked Caltrans for organizing this very important event and went on to say, “this day is about much more than these fallen workers, it’s about their families”. Vassiliades reminded all who were in attendance by saying, “when heading out the door and getting on the highway, to keep in mind to do our part, in ensuring that these workers return home safely”.



PECG has been a steadfast supporter of this commemorative event and has been contributing to funds to benefit the families of workers killed on the job for their initial needs via the California Transportation Foundation.

**LA Section’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Calendar of Events:**

Mar. 11, 2015	Section officers attend US Rep Alan Lowenthal’s birthday event at Maya Hotel
Mar. 18, 2015	Officers attend 2015 Science Fair Prep meeting at LACOE building in Downey
Mar. 25, 2015	Officers attend PECG sponsored Caltrans Adopt a School event in District 7
Mar. 26, 2015	<b>LA Section EC Monthly Meeting in Caltrans D7 Conference Room 1-037</b>
Mar. 26-28, 15	LA Section volunteers help judge 2015 LA County Science Fair in Pasadena
Apr. 1, 2015	Quarterly Luncheon at Stevens Steakhouse with assembly-man Patrick O’Donnell
Apr. 7, 2015	Section Officers meet with US Rep. Linda Sanchez at district office in Cerritos
Apr. 9, 2015	Section Officers meet with US Reps. Judy Chu, Norma Torres and Ed Royce
Apr. 16-17, 15	US Academic Decathlon National Competition at Garden Grove Hyatt Hotel
Apr. 22, 2015	Officers attend 2015 Science Fair Debrief meeting at SpaceX building in Downey
Apr. 25, 2015	Officers attend State Senator Tony Mendoza’s birthday at Tamayo Restaurant
Apr. 27, 2015	Officers attend monthly DPOC meeting in Santa Ana voting for new delegates
Apr. 29, 2015	<b>LA Section EC Monthly Meeting in Caltrans D7 Conference Room 1-037</b>
May 2, 2015	Officers attend US Rep Alan Lowenthal’s event at Jim Phelps home in Irvine
May 6, 2015	Section President speaks at Caltrans Workers Memorial event in Camarillo
May 7, 2015	Section sponsors the Caltrans D7 Annual RE Meeting and distributes trinkets
May 7, 2015	Officers attend College Board of Trustees Sunny Zia’s event in Long Beach
May 9, 2015	Officers attend South County Labor’s 2015 Dan Foley Award event in San Pedro
May 15-16, 15	PECG Section and Corporate officers attend CDP State Convention in Anaheim
May 27, 2015	<b>LA Section EC Monthly Meeting in Caltrans D7 Conference Room 1-037</b>
May 28, 2015	Officers invited to US Rep. Norma Torres’ event, Coco Palm Pomona Restaurant
June 5-6, 2015	PECG Board of Directors Quarterly Meeting in Sacramento



**PECG Member Proudly Featured on Caltrans Inside 7:**

On February 28, 2015, District 7 TASAS Coordinator Seyed “Amir” Torabzadeh received the 2015 Orange County Engineering Council (OCEC) Outstanding Service Award. The award was presented at OCEC’s annual Honors and Awards Banquet in Anaheim, which recognizes individuals, companies and government agencies that have made significant contributions to the engineering community in Southern California (left photo-Seyed Torabzadeh with OCEC President Spiros Courellis and Secretary Debbie Clarke).

“I was very pleased and honored when I learned that I was selected,” said Seyed. “We congratulate Seyed on winning the prestigious OCEC Outstanding Service Award,” said District 7 Director Carrie Bowen. “His professional achievements have been recognized by OCEC, and it is an honor to have such an outstanding individual representing the District.” Seyed’s journey to the OCEC awards ceremony began decades ago. When he was 19, he broke his neck in a gymnastics accident. Despite the challenges in adapting to a new life as a wheelchair user, he earned Bachelors and Masters Degrees in Systems Engineering from USC. He also became an advocate for people with disabilities, working to improve access, raise awareness and increase employment opportunities. Seyed began his career at Caltrans in 1988 and he currently works as a Coordinator of the Traffic Accident and Surveillance Analysis System (TASAS). In addition to PECG, Seyed is a member and Board of Trustee of a cultural and educational foundation in Los Angeles, a regular participant in many disability, equality and diversity awareness activities, member of the Industrial and Systems Engineering Honor Society and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

**Report and Photo Coverage of PECG Sponsored Annual County Science Fair in Los Angeles:**

The 65<sup>th</sup> Los Angeles County Annual Science and Engineering Fair (LACSF) was spectacular as always and attendance was bigger than ever this year. The fair began Thursday, March 26<sup>th</sup> and was concluded on Saturday, March 28<sup>th</sup> with the Awards Ceremony at the Pasadena Convention Center before proud parents and science professionals and enthusiasts. Since 2004 PECG contributes funds, gives certificates, medals and awards, and serves on the Science Fair Committee as a pivotal sponsoring partner each year. This fair is the oldest regional science fair in the Western United States and has over a thousand student entries each year, from some 200 public, private and parochial schools, competing in Junior and Senior



Divisions, in 38 different areas of study. Their topics range from Physics to Chemistry, Materials Science to Mathematics, Environmental Management to Engineering Research and from Engineering Applications to Molecular Biology.

Engineers from Caltrans, OSHPD, ARB, CDPH, DSA, DIR, DGS, Cal-OSHA and CA RWQCB served as student judges this year, together with about 200 other volunteers from the public and private sector, reviewing and selecting the finalists for the awards. Judges attended an instructional workshop on student judging before evaluating the projects on-site during the event. Projects were judged on creativity, scientific thought, skill, clarity and presentation. Of about 1,000 student entries reviewed, over two dozen projects were shortlisted and judged by the special awards team. The top 17 projects were advanced for further judging by the special awards team. These finalists received honorable mention certificates, recognition medals and gift cards from Target stores from the Los Angeles Section of PECG. A full report with photos of the science fair is available for viewing on the LA Section website at [www.lapeccg.net](http://www.lapeccg.net).

**PECG SPECIAL AWARDS' HONORABLE MENTION WINNERS**

**Kassandra Canalita** (CA Academy of Math & Science) - Marilyn J. Reece Award (\$1000)

**George Khouri** (Sierra Canyon School) - James E. Roberts Award (\$500)

**Andrew Karroum**, (Torrance Nativity Catholic School) - James E. Roberts Award (\$500)

1. **Nicholas Luchetta**, Grade 7, Holy Angels School, Archdiocese
2. **Valentina Juarez**, Grade 6, Niemes Elementary School, ABCUSD
3. **Fashion Castillo-Delgadillo**, Grade 6, Niemes Elementary School, ABCUSD
4. **Ian Kennealy**, Grade 7, Saint Timothy School, Archdiocese
5. **Melany Arriola**, Grade 8, Magnolia Science Academy, LAUSD
6. **Camila Fernandez**, Grade 8, Magnolia Science Academy, LAUSD
7. **Jahan Razavi**, Grade 6, Mirman School, Private
8. **Kaitly Arst**, Grade 9, Daniel Pearl Magnet High School, LAUSD
9. **Amanda Arts**, Grade 9, Daniel Pearl Magnet High School, LAUSD
10. **Jiamin Xu**, Grade 8, South Pasadena Middle School, SPUSD
11. **Jaemyung Choi**, Grade 8, South Pasadena Middle School, SPUSD
12. **Faatima Zahra Motala**, Grade 8, Institute of Knowledge, Private
13. **Pauline Alarcon**, Grade 10, Los Angeles County High School for the Arts
14. **Christopher Isozaki**, Grade 9, Palos Verdes High School, PVPUSD

Below photos are from PECG Sponsored April 16, 2015 US Academic Decathlon Competition in Garden Grove



The United States **Academic Decathlon (USAD)** is an annual high school academic competition organized by the non-profit United States Academic Decathlon Association. The competition consists of seven multiple choice tests, two performance events, and an essay. Academic Decathlon was created by Robert Peterson in 1968 for local schools in Orange County, California and expanded nationwide in 1981. The ten events require knowledge in many academic disciplines. Students must take seven multiple choice tests in art, economics, language and literature, math, music, science and social science. These topics, with the exception of math, are thematically linked each year. One of the multiple choice events, alternating between science and social science, is chosen for the **Super Quiz**. In addition to the seven **objective events**, there are three **subjective events** graded by judges: These events are the essay, the interview and the speech.

Below photos are from PECG Sponsored Caltrans 2015 Adopt A School Event held in District 7 on January 24, 2015

It is all about sharing our life experiences with a student, and becoming a MENTOR requires no special skills, but only kindness and commitment to someone in need. The LA Section of PECG with its energized members offered mentors to work with students in the Transportation Academies for Franklin, Wilson and Dorsey High Schools. Caltrans District 7 has partnered with Franklin High School in Highland Park for the past 15 years and with Wilson High School of Los Angeles for 9 years to provide Mentors to the students involved in their Transportation Academy. This year, Dorsey High School became the newest partner. The Transportation Academy is designed for students who have expressed an interest in pursuing a career in the transportation industry. This year, there were over 85 Academy students that were in need of a Mentor. The LA Section provided mentors, and food and refreshments to all students and staff during a day of mentoring. This was a welcome opportunity to introduce our organization to students, staff and accompanying teachers.



**. Report and Photo Coverage of PECG 2015 Legislative Day at the State Capitol in March : .**

On March 3, 2015, PECG leaders representing every PECG section from across the state, including 9 officers from the LA Section traveled to Sacramento to meet with their state legislators at the state capitol. These meetings are held once a year and provide a forum and a unique opportunity to meet with elected state officials and have a direct conversation with representatives in both houses. Meetings were held all day from 9 am to 5 pm in small groups in a round-table format with PECG officers and with each elected official in 30 min sessions to discuss selected topics of representation.



**Photo below at the Capitol Rotunda with PECG Leadership assembled during the 2015 Legislative Day in Sacramento.**



**Standing - at the 2015 LEG day event: Ed Jackson (2), Refugio Dominguez (7), Sutida Bergquist (9), Jesse Rodriguez (10), Reza Jahromi (15), John Vassiliades (16). Seating: PECG Pres. Roy Flores (1) & Past Pres. Cathrina Barros (2)**

Section Officers with Assembly-Speaker Toni Atkins, Assembly-member Patrick O'Donnell and Controller Betty Yee .



Section Officers with Senator Tony Mendoza, Assembly-member Matt Dababneh and Insur. Commissioner Dave Jones .



Before heading to these meetings all section officers met at PECG’s headquarters conference room for an early breakfast briefing meeting, and then attended their appointments in small and pre-assigned teams. Among the topics of discussion were infrastructure funding (mainly transportation), outsourcing, health care issues, and this year especially the PECG-sponsored AB 320, which would authorize licensing for **Environmental Engineering**. Meetings were held in the Capitol Offices of 86 of California’s 120 legislators, followed by a reception that evening in the Capitol Rotunda.

About the Assembly Bill 320 that would authorize licensure of **Environmental Engineers**, this would be a "Title Act" license, meaning if the bill, sponsored by PECG and authored by Assembly Member Jim Wood, becomes law, only a licensed Environmental Engineer could utilize that title. PECG leaders were also in Washington, D.C. in March to participate in the Annual Conference of the National Association of State Highway and Transportation Unions (**NASHTU**), which is comprised of 38 labor organizations representing state transportation department engineers and other employees throughout the nation. Each year, Congress distributes federal gas tax revenue from the Highway Trust Fund to the states. The Fund is currently \$15 billion short and a solution to provide additional revenue has been difficult to achieve, threatening funding for highway and other transportation projects nationally as the summer construction season approaches. There are also proposals to mandate or provide incentives to states which outsource their design and inspection functions to private firms. NASHTU and PECG are supporting **HR 1692**, a bill authored by Maryland Congresswoman Donna Edwards (who was also PECG’s Legislator of the Year in 2014) which would require construction inspection to be performed by publicly-employed engineers, not private contractors. PECG leaders met with several California Congressional Members and their staffs in their Washington, D.C. offices to discuss transportation, water, and other issues.

**February 21, 2015 Photos with LA Section Officers attending US Rep Norma Torres' Swearing Ceremony in Pomona**



***Update on contract negotiations to renew Unit 9 Employees' Memorandum of Understanding***

Every year in May, the Governor releases his “**May Revise**”, which is an update to his January projections of revenue and expenditures for the upcoming fiscal year beginning in July. In presenting his May Revision yesterday, the Governor projected that state revenue in the General Fund through June 2016 will be **\$6.7 billion more than he estimated in January**. The Governor wants about \$1.9 billion of the excess to go to fund the “rainy day” reserve required by voter-approved Proposition 2 last year, with another \$1.9 billion to fund debt repayments. He also generally outlined his plan for “partnering with state employees to share the prefunding of retiree benefits going forward”, referring to retiree health plan premiums. For future hires, he also proposes to require them to work longer in order to qualify for retiree health plan premium contributions by the state, all part of a set of proposals being presented to PECG and others in contract negotiations. His State Budget proposal includes funds for increased employee compensation, including the **3.3% salary increase on July 1, 2015** for Unit 9 employees and their supervisors and managers. CalHR (Governor’s negotiators) and the PECG Bargaining Teams met again after the May Revise announcement to continue negotiations for a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which would take effect on July 2 if agreement is reached. Bargaining sessions are continuing through May and the process may continue even beyond the mid June state budget approval deadline. The Governor also stated that the repair, maintenance and operations of the **state highway system** “have been largely overlooked” and need more funding. He pledged to work with the Legislature “to develop a funding package by year end”. He is also proposing \$500 million from Cap and Trade funds be used for the **high-speed rail** project, double the amount he proposed in January. Meanwhile, **Caltrans has projected that \$80 billion will be needed over the next ten years to repair and maintain the existing system**. Current projected available funding is only \$20 billion over that time period. The May Revision includes an additional \$2.2 billion to continue the state’s response to drought impacts and acceleration of key provisions of the California Water Action Plan.

**Update on Retirement Plans**

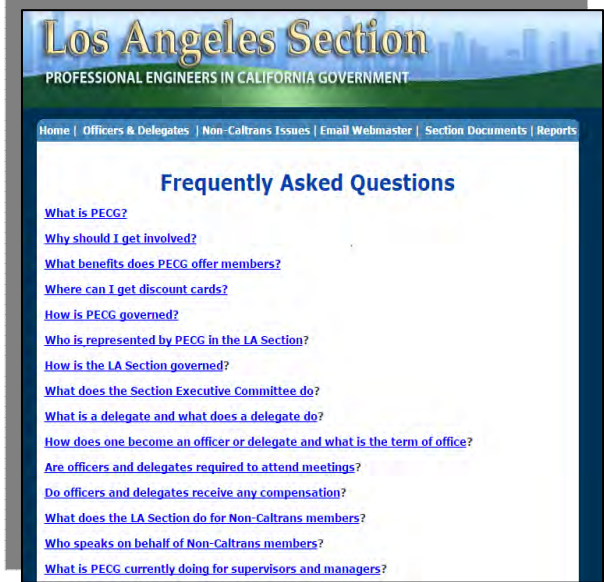
**Meanwhile, Protecting retirement plans** for public employees received another boost in early May when a bankruptcy judge upheld a plan by the City of San Bernardino to continue full payments to CalPERS for their employees’ and retirees’ pensions despite having declared bankruptcy. Two creditors who are not expected to receive full payments challenged the plan but their request was dismissed. Last fall, another bankruptcy judge approved full CalPERS payments from the City of Stockton, which had also declared bankruptcy. The attempts to find a legal way not to pay public employees pensions remain very high in the agenda of those groups opposed government pensions.

**PECG Annual Elections Coming up! "How to Become a PECG Officer" - Candidates Needed**



The organization's Bylaws require the election of officers to be held annually and be completed in time for the annual meeting and installation of new officers by early autumn. The corporate office mails out all election related material and ballots for two separate elections, one for corporate officers and a separate one for the local section elections. Corporate elected officers are responsible to oversee the day-to-day administration and operations of PECG statewide, while section officers are responsible to run the local sections. While membership in PECG is

an easy requirement for candidates to meet, the greatest challenge is finding candidates who are ready and willing to work many hours as volunteers to serve the interest of PECG and its members. As in all non-profit organizations, directors and officers receive no compensation, except for operational and travel reimbursement when doing business for PECG. Their work definitely outweighs the benefits. Those who actually come forward are believers of a big and noble objective, "to serve those whose affinity is for a career profession through public service". In each election members need to decide if this extracurricular activity is something they have an interest for. Please visit <http://www.lapecg.net/faq.htm> to read some frequently asked questions in order to confirm if your interest is in line with these activities. Once ready, please talk with any officer shown on the photo below, or call any officer from the list shown online at our website at <http://www.lapecg.net/officers.htm> to assist you with



filling out an application, or a petition form with the required number of signatures. The selection of office candidates is done by an election committee, or by collecting petition signatures up to a required number a member may qualify to run as a candidate. Then once the election materials get finalized, readied and mailed to members, **it is so important that all of us do our duty to vote.** If no agreement is reached by the Annual Meeting day in September on a Unit 9 MOU, the new officers elected from this process, will be responsible to continue negotiations with the CalHR representatives until an agreement is reached. Meanwhile the



previous MOU will remain in effect. As of the time of writing this report there was no announcement of a breakthrough. Let's hope there would be progress and the news will be positive. Our officers feel proud of their accomplishments so far and hope our members will renew their trust in the upcoming election!

