

## Retirements Mean Change – And Opportunity

One out of three water district employees will be eligible for retirement in the next couple of years. Who has heard this statistic? Who is living this statistic? Anecdotally, JPIA has found this to be true at the member agencies. It is certainly true at JPIA where by 2019, 23 employees will reach retirement eligibility, meaning a potential staff turnover of 47 percent. Whether an agency has ten percent or 40 percent reaching that magic age, all public entities will be faced with personnel changes in the coming years.

These changes introduce challenges from two fronts: working with staff before they depart to prevent the loss of institutional knowledge; and once gone, replacing the staff and assimilating new staff into the team and overall organization. This is really nothing new; staff come and go and employers hire and retain, but the number and frequency of these occurrences is about to skyrocket for many.

Safeguarding the knowledge retained by staff before they depart must be priority number one. Capturing the “gems” of information has never been a greater challenge. Many retirees have worked 20, 30, or more years for the district and retain immense knowledge regarding operations, support, and the district. Some studies conclude that written information such as policies, procedures, manuals, and documents accounts for only ten percent of the knowledge that any one employee possesses. The real nuggets of gold are found in that remaining 90 percent. How can this critical knowledge be captured? How can it be sifted and categorized in order



to enable others to access it? How do employers move this personal knowledge into the realm of public knowledge? All good questions. JPIA has developed and utilized a variety of tools to aid in this project. Information can be obtained on JPIA’s website under the Resources tab or by viewing the recorded webinar “Avoiding the Brain Drain,” also accessible through the website, under Training. By sharing best practices, ideas and solutions, each member of the pool can better prevent the institutional knowledge from going down the drain.

At the JPIA, the last two years have seen four of the ten members of the management team retire. A 40 per-

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The Perspective (ISSN 1073-5380) is published bi-monthly for its membership for a fee by the ACWA JPIA, P. O. Box 619082, Roseville, CA 95661-9082. Periodical postage is paid at Roseville and additional offices. It is produced and edited by Sylvia Robinson, ACWA JPIA's Publications & Web Editor. Prior written permission from the ACWA JPIA is required for any whole or partial reproduction of this newsletter. Postmaster: Please send address changes to Perspective C/O ACWA JPIA, P. O. Box 619082, Roseville, CA 95661-9082.

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## Retirements Mean Change – And Opportunity

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cent turnover at that level impacts the entire organization. Though all did not leave at the same time, the realization that the team was now made up of almost half new managers meant not only was training needed, but immersion into the JPIA culture was also a priority. This became a goal for the team in order to guarantee the continuity of outstanding service for which JPIA is known.

At the beginning of 2017, the JPIA management team embarked on a six-month training program to garner new ideas on management and also to come together as a team each month and experience a personal growth event. It allowed for an occasion to understand individual operating styles and walk away a stronger, more cohesive group. Some of the topics discussed focused on big picture elements such as being a values-based leader. Others drilled down to improving skills in delegation, problem solving, developing others, and more. Overall, it helped participants understand what habits were not so effective at leading others and how to adapt in order to operate in a more powerful way.

Though new and existing district staff may have management experience, there is much value in refreshing the skills, but even greater value in taking the journey together. As the new team gains a better understanding of each other, this can translate to a more positive culture, improved working relationships and goal achievement, while preventing employee issues, miscommunication, and complaints. This is an end result everyone can embrace.

*Written by: Patricia Slaven, Director of Administration*

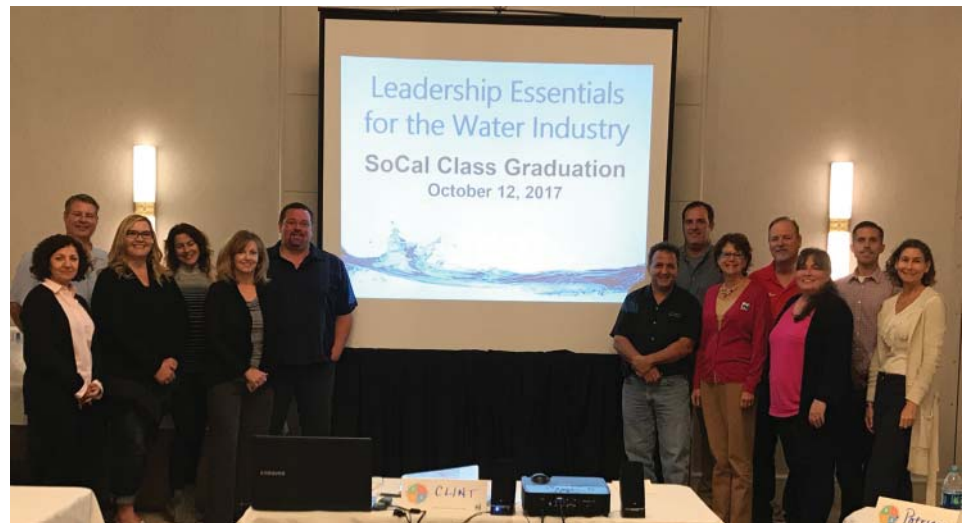
## Leadership Essentials For The Water Industry Graduations



Northern California Leadership Graduating Class

L/R: Patricia, JPIA Facilitator; Brian Lockwood, Pajaro Valley WMA; Paul Peschel, Kings River CD; Jesse Saich, El Dorado ID; Missy Pieri, Citrus Heights WD; Susan Sohal, Citrus Heights WD; Kevin King, Solano ID; Garrett Haertel, San Benito CWD; Clint Camac, Instructor.

Not pictured: David McNair, Scotts Valley WD; James Arenz, Sacramento Suburban WD; Jonnie Allison, Frazier Park PUD; and Ryan McNally, Browns Valley ID.



Southern California Graduating Class

LEFT SIDE L/R: Maryam Bral, Goleta WD; Clint Camac, Instructor; Janet Gutierrez, San Luis WD; Catherine McCalvin, United WD; Tammy Hierlihy, Central Basin MWD; and Brian Collins, United WD.

RIGHT SIDE L/R: Michael Gualtieri, La Habra Heights CWD; Chris Borges, Goleta WD; Patricia Slaven, JPIA Facilitator; Dennis Williams, Valley Center MWD; Tammy Ruddock, Mid-Peninsula WD; Clayton Strahan, United WD; Stacy Taylor, Mesa WD.

# Low Employee Engagement In Government: A Bad News – Good News Story

By Robert Lavigna, IPMA-SCP

Government organizations across the country are under enormous pressure, facing harsh criticism while still being expected to maintain and improve performance despite budget and personnel cuts. Public sector human resources leaders and professionals are in the eye of the storm kicked up by this trifecta, working hard to enable their organizations to attract, develop and retain talent despite the tough environment.

When I speak to groups of public sector leaders and professionals, I often cite a friend of mine who writes about government. As he puts it, in government, they ask us to do more with less, then even more with less. Ultimately, they want us to do everything with nothing.

A joke? Sure, but every joke contains some truth. And research on the impacts of this do-more-with-less challenge is out there. The July/August 2017 issue of *Public Administration Review* includes “The Effects of Doing More With Less in the Public Sector: Evidence From a Large-Scale Survey.”

As you may suspect, the effects are not good. Results from the “six hierarchical linear regression models” run by Marc Esteve, Christian Schuster, Adria Albareda and Carlos Losada include the finding that reduced budgets and longer working hours have “dampened” motivation among public servants in Europe. As the authors conclude, “There are no free austerity lunches.” No reason exists to think the situation is any different here in the United States.

So how can public sector organizations succeed—and even thrive—in this difficult environment? One proven response is to improve the level of engagement among em-

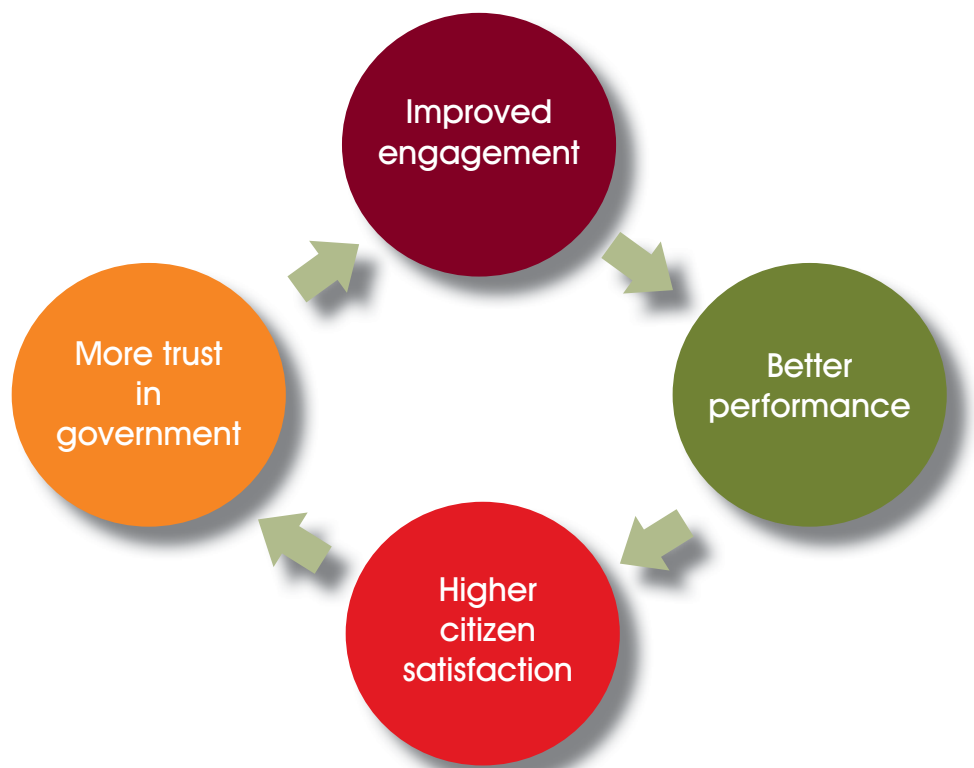
ployees. The primary resource we have in government is talent. If our people are engaged and, therefore, perform well, government will also perform well.

The U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board defines employee engagement as “a heightened connection between employees and their work,

settings, including government. Additionally, engaged employees are more likely to go above the minimum and expend discretionary effort to deliver performance.

As I wrote in *Engaging Government Employees*, greater engagement leads to greater achievement of strategic goals, more responsive custom-

## Employee Engagement Value Chain



their organization or the people they work for or with.” The board continues in its 2008 report on the power of engagement to the president and Congress that “engaged employees find personal meaning in their work, take pride in what they do and where they do it, and believe that their organization values them.”

Decades of research have shown that improving employee engagement can be a key to improving organizational performance in all

er service, increased innovation, enhanced retention of good employees, decreased absenteeism and even better workplaces safe. The engagement value chain included with this article (above) illustrates why engagement matters in government. Engagement drives desirable outcomes and moves the needle of public opinion about government. And don’t we need to move that needle?

## Engagement Is Low

A poll conducted by my organization, The Institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement at CPS HR Consulting, revealed that 44 percent of private-sector employees are fully engaged. This compares with 38 percent of public sector employees. The gap is statistically significant.

We broke the results down by level of government. Those results indicate that engagement is higher among local government employees than among workers at the federal or state levels. However, we still found that fewer than half of local government employees are fully engaged.

## Drivers of Engagement

In addition to understanding overall engagement levels, we designed our survey to reveal the factors that have the biggest impacts on employee engagement—in other words, the key drivers of engagement—because employees considered them the most important. We analyzed potential drivers such as leadership, supervision, training and development, the work itself, appreciation and inclusion, and organizational culture. Across both the public and private sectors, we found that the top drivers are:

- Leadership and managing change,
- Training and development,
- The work itself, and
- Employee recognition and value.

We also identified the drivers by level of government and found some differences among federal, state and local government employees. While leadership and managing changes was the top driver at all levels, “my supervisor” was the second-highest driver in local government. That factor was not among the top drivers for federal and state government employees.

We also did a deeper dive into the actual scores for each engagement driver. For the top driver, leadership and managing change, the score for government is significantly lower than it is for engagement in the private sector. In business, 65 percent of employees reported feeling positive about leadership and change management in their companies, compared to only 55 percent in government.

For training and development, the government score (62 percent positive) is also lower than the private sector score (65 percent). The same is true for “I feel valued” (67 percent positive in government versus 72 percent positive in the private sector). Only for “my work” are the government scores (slightly) higher than the private sector scores (an 80 percent to 78 percent, respectively). The detailed poll results are contained in “Driving Employee Engagement: Results from a National Survey”, which was just released the institute.

## Taking Action

What can we conclude, and what is actionable, from our research?

To summarize:

- Engagement in the public sector is lower than in the private sector.
- Local government employees have a higher level of engagement than employees in federal and state government.
- The overall priority areas of focus in government are
- Leadership and managing change,
- The work itself.
- Training and development,
- Appreciation and recognition, and
- Supervision (in local government).

While our poll results are revealing, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to improving engagement in

government, especially since there are roughly 90,000 government jurisdictions just in the United States. Still, as we often hear, you can’t manage what you don’t measure. This applies to employee engagement.

Organizations need to survey their employees to create an engagement baseline. Doing this will allow leaders to understand what employees feel is working and what they believe needs to be improved. The organization must then take action on the survey results to build a culture of engagement.

Now to explain why I subtitled this article “a bad news–good news story.”

The bad news is that engagement is low in government, as are the scores for the key drivers of engagement. The good news is that the low scores suggest that there is tremendous potential to improve engagement in government—and, thereby, improve the performance of government.

To help accomplish this goal, the Institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement and IPMA-HR have forged a new partnership through which the institute provides employee engagement survey and related services to association members. Please contact me for more information and/or a copy of the report on our poll results.

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*Bob Lavigna is director of the institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement with CPS HR consulting. He has more than 30 years of experience leading public sector HR organizations and programs, and is a past IPMA-HR president. He can be reached at [rlavigna@cpshr.us](mailto:rlavigna@cpshr.us).*

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## Legal Update

**Government Code 946.4** requires an entity to file a 53051 info statement with the Secretary of State and the county clerk of each county in which the entity maintains an office. Failure to do so voids defense of failure to file a claim. The Secretary of State form (NPSF-405) must be completed within ten days of a change in the governing body, either a change of address or a new board member. If there is a change on the board, this form must be filed.

**SB 63 New Parent Leave Act** Beginning January 1, 2018, Employers of 20 to 49 employees are required to provide their employees with new parental leave rights following the birth, adoption, or foster care placement of a child.

**AB 168 Prior Salary Info** Employers can no longer ask job applicants about their prior salary and, if requested, must give the applicant a pay range for the job they are seeking.

**Obesity is not a disability.** The United States Supreme Court has refused to accept a case under the ADA that sought to have obesity determined to be a disability.

Join the JPIA on December 13 at 2 p.m. or December 19 at 10 a.m. for a live webinar, *New Laws For 2018*. To register, go to the JPIA website and click on the Training tab, then Webinars. Participants may attend individually or as a group.

*Written by: Robert Greenfield, Legal Counsel*

## Record Donations Raised For Breast Cancer Research During Walnut Valley Water District's Annual "Pink Day"

Walnut Valley Water District employees held their annual October "Pink Day," a Breast Cancer Awareness fund raiser for the Susan G. Komen Foundation, and set a new record for donations. To date, District employees have raised more than \$300 and will continue to collect funds throughout the month.

Employees showed their support for Breast Cancer Awareness by wearing pink attire and pink ribbons in support of Breast Cancer research and to promote the importance of women and men taking active responsibility for their health.

"Our employees are dedicated to helping create greater awareness for this cause, support for survivors, and hope for a cure!" said Walnut Valley Water District's General Manager Mike Holmes.

Walnut Valley Water District employees have raised funds for the Susan G. Komen Foundation for the past four years and will continue efforts to promote healthy lifestyles and awareness year-round.



# Not A Typical Health Fair: Byron-Bethany Irrigation District Takes Health To A New Level

The Wellness, Health, and Safety Day at Byron-Bethany Irrigation District proved to be as unique, energizing, and thoughtful as the District itself. Byron-Bethany is a leader in the water community, recently receiving the esteemed Association of California Water Agencies Excellence in Water Leadership award.

The day started with a warm welcome from the event organizer, Kelley Geyer, Director of Administration; Bernadette Jones, Chief Human Resource Officer; and Rick Gilmore, General Manager. The District office became a meet and greet area for the event sponsors and staff. Byron-Bethany provided a spectacular feast, which was locally sourced, featuring fruits and vegetables to celebrate National Fruits & Veggies Month. It was superb and enjoyed by all. Nick Janes, Director of Public Affairs, snapped photos capturing the energy of the day. Byron-Bethany invited its neighbors at San Luis Delta-Mendota Water Authority and The West Side Irrigation District to join in this great event.

With full bellies, they kicked off the day in the auditorium with a presentation from Ben Hayden, JPIA Lead Benefits Analyst, easing all attendees into the wealth of benefits available to them. This presentation was followed by Michelle Gordon, PA, talking about discovering health and vitality through exercise. The grand finale was a presentation about building mindfulness skills to recognize what one prioritizes in interpersonal communication with Bowbay Liang-Hua Feng, LMFT.

The quality of the topics that were sprinkled throughout the afternoon were particularly impressive. They showed ways to ensure personal safety as well as suggestions on how to live a less stressful life; practical workshops focused on emergency preparedness, mental and spiritual wellbeing, and motivational speeches. In addition, an acupuncturist had a mobile office like a \*MASH TENT\* set up where she treated interested staff. The wait list was quite long! Attendees also received chair massages.

To see all District staff actively participate in the sessions was affirming that Byron-Bethany is indeed a special workplace. Several people mentioned how unique and positive the experience had been. The JPIA is certainly looking forward to next year's invitation.

To learn more about the event, please reach out to Kelley Geyer at (209) 835-0375.

*Written by: Karen Thesing, Director of Insurance Services*



## Form 700 Filing For 2018 Is Just Around The Corner

The JPIA has contracted with SouthTech Systems to provide members with the flexibility of completing their Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) Form 700s online.

This allows filers to easily and securely complete or amend their Form 700, while the eDisclosure™ software automatically checks for errors and omissions.

The automation of Form 700 filing has reduced errors, eliminated the need for “wet” signatures on filings, and has increased productivity by consolidating information.

Members with changes to their designated JPIA Director, should complete the Change of Director form on the JPIA website on the Committees tab / Board of Directors, scroll down to the bottom and click on Change of Director Form.

Contact Bobbette Wells at [bwells@acwajpia.com](mailto:bwells@acwajpia.com) or (800) 231-5742, extension 3161 with any questions concerning e-filing.

*Written by: Bobbette Wells, Executive Assistant to the CEO*

## ACWA JPIA Mission Statement

*The ACWA Joint Powers Insurance Authority is dedicated to consistently and cost effectively providing the broadest possible affordable insurance coverages and related services to its member agencies.*