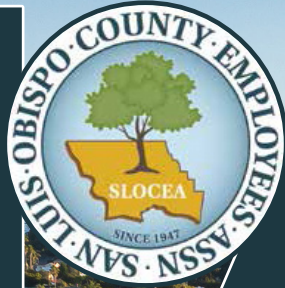


THE COUNTY

BLADE



VOLUME 41, NO. 9

SEPTEMBER 2026

**YOUR SUPERVISOR
SAID WHAT?
KNOW WHEN TO ASK FOR
UNION REPRESENTATION**

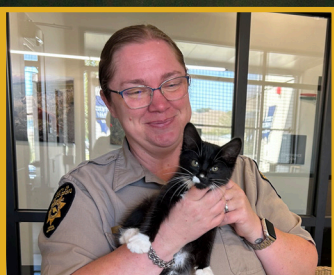
**FIND
FEATHERS!**



SLOCEA's mascot, **FEATHERS**, is hidden somewhere in this month's edition of The County Blade!

The **FIRST FIVE** SLOCEA members to find Feathers win a **\$5 JAMBA JUICE GIFT CARD!**

Email **INFO@SLOCEA.ORG** with the page number where you found Feathers for a chance to win!



**DEPARTMENT
SPOTLIGHT:
ANIMAL CONTROL
OFFICERS**

**COUNTY
HEALTHCARE
UPDATES**

**WORKPLACE
HARASSMENT 101:
WHAT'S AGAINST
THE LAW & AND
WHAT ISN'T**

SLOCEA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

— SLOCEA MISSION STATEMENT —

The mission of the San Luis Obispo County Employees' Association is to advocate for fair compensation, safe working conditions, affordable healthcare, and a secure retirement for our members, who provide vital services to the public.

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Seat 15

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VACANT

Seat 16

AT LARGE

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Ben Franco

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VACANT

Seat 19

THE COUNTY BLADE

SLOCEA

San Luis Obispo County Employees' Association

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Jennifer Tate

Labor Representative I

Carrie McGrath

Labor Representative I

Briana Dickey

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**HAVE A QUESTION?
CALL SLOCEA
805-543-2021**

Cover Image: An aerial view of the boardwalk in Pismo Beach.
Photo Credit: Kevin Chen via iStock by Getty Images.

The opinions expressed in **The County Blade** do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the **San Luis Obispo County Employees' Association** unless so specified.

For advertising information, please call Tana Pigeon at 951-686-7575.

The County Blade is published digitally monthly, distributed to the SLOCEA membership through the website, email, and social media.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING



JOIN US FOR

- ✓ The Annual Union Report
- ✓ Meeting of the Board of Directors
- ✓ Learn about the full range of AMBA benefits
- ✓ Food & Refreshments
- ✓ Prizes

... and MORE!

**OCTOBER
22**

5:30 pm

**SLO Vets Hall
801 Grand Ave
SLO**



Scan Me

RSVP TODAY!

SLOCEA
805-543-2021
Info@slocea.org



Your Supervisor Said What?

Know When To Ask For Union Representation

Emily Landis,
Executive Director



It can start with a simple request: “Can you come into my office for a minute?”

Maybe your supervisor wants to ask you a few questions about something that happened at work. Maybe another manager is already sitting in the room. Maybe you are told that someone made a complaint, there was an incident, or management just wants to “get your side of the story.”

At what point should you ask for a SLOCEA representative?

Knowing the answer before you find yourself in that situation is important. Union-represented employees have what are commonly known as **Weingarten Rights**, the right to request union representation during an investigatory interview that the employee reasonably believes could result in discipline.

These rights are an important workplace protection, but there is one critical thing every member should know: **you generally need to ask for representation.**

WHAT ARE WEINGARTEN RIGHTS?

Weingarten Rights take their name from a 1975 U.S. Supreme Court decision involving an employee who was questioned by management about suspected misconduct and repeatedly requested union representation.

The Court recognized that employees represented by a union have a right to request union representation during certain investigatory interviews.

“

Union-represented employees have what are commonly known as Weingarten Rights, the right to request union representation during an investigatory interview that the employee reasonably believes could result in discipline.

”

In practical terms, three elements are generally important:

- **Management is questioning you.** This isn’t simply management giving you routine instructions or informing you of a decision. They are asking questions or seeking information from you.
- **The questioning is investigatory.** Management is trying to determine what happened, who was responsible, whether a policy was violated, or other facts related to potential misconduct.
- **You reasonably believe the interview could lead to discipline.** You don’t have to know that discipline will occur. If the circumstances give you a reasonable concern that your answers could potentially result in discipline, you should consider requesting representation.

RECOGNIZING THE MOMENT

Not every conversation with your supervisor requires a union representative. Supervisors need to communicate with employees every day about assignments, schedules, performance expectations and

routine workplace issues. Most of this communication is not disciplinary.

The important thing is recognizing when an ordinary conversation begins to change.

For example, imagine your supervisor asks you to stop by their office and begins with:

“Can you tell me what happened yesterday?”

At first, you may not know where the conversation is going. But then the questions become more specific:

“Why didn’t you follow the procedure?”

“Who else was involved?”

“Did you know that wasn’t allowed?”

“Can you explain why you made that decision?”

At that point, you may realize management isn’t simply having a routine conversation. They may be gathering information that could be used in determining whether discipline is appropriate.

You do not have to wait until someone tells you that you are being investigated to request representation.

If you reasonably believe your answers could lead to discipline, you can ask.

YOU HAVE TO SPEAK UP

One of the most important things to remember about Weingarten Rights is that management generally does not have to automatically provide you with a union representative before questioning you.

You need to request one.

You don't need special legal language. You can simply say:

"I would like to have a union representative present before I answer any questions."

If you're unsure whether the meeting could become disciplinary, you can still ask what the meeting is about and whether the conversation could potentially result in discipline.

Once you make a valid request for representation, management generally has choices: grant the request and allow representation, end the interview, or give you the option of continuing without representation. You should not be required to continue an investigatory interview without representation after properly invoking your right.

WHAT DOES YOUR UNION REPRESENTATIVE ACTUALLY DO?

A union representative isn't there simply to sit quietly beside you.

Your representative may be able to help clarify the purpose of the meeting, ask management to explain confusing questions, help you understand what information is being requested, provide relevant information, and help ensure the interview is conducted fairly.

They can also help you avoid a very common problem: trying to fill uncomfortable silence by guessing, speculating or providing information beyond what was actually asked.

If you don't know or don't remember something, say so. Your representative can help you stay focused on answering questions

“

The best time to learn about your rights isn't when you're already sitting across the table from management.

”

truthfully and accurately without feeling pressured to provide an answer you aren't sure about.

WHAT IF I'M ASKED TO WRITE A STATEMENT?

The same caution should apply when management asks you to provide a written statement about an incident that could potentially involve misconduct or discipline.

A request for a written statement may feel less serious than being called into an interview, but your written response could become part of an investigation.

Before providing a written statement involving a potentially disciplinary matter, contact SLOCEA. We can help you understand the situation and determine what representation or assistance may be appropriate.

The same goes for requests to respond to allegations by email or in writing. The format may be different, but the information you provide can still matter.

WHAT IF DISCIPLINE HAS ALREADY BEEN ISSUED?

Weingarten Rights specifically concern investigatory questioning; they don't mean you have the right to union representation during every conversation with management.

For example, a meeting where management is simply delivering discipline that has already been

decided may be different from an investigatory interview.

But that doesn't mean you should navigate discipline alone.

If you receive a written warning, notice of intent to discipline, performance-related document, or other action you believe may affect your employment, contact SLOCEA as soon as possible. Different processes have different rights and deadlines, and waiting can limit the options available to you.

WHEN IN DOUBT, ASK

Most employees will never memorize every rule governing investigatory interviews, and you shouldn't have to.

Instead, remember the warning signs.

If management is asking questions about something that went wrong, investigating a complaint, asking you to explain your conduct, requesting a statement about potential misconduct, or asking questions that make you reasonably concerned discipline could follow, **stop and consider whether you need representation before continuing.**

Asking for a union representative does not mean you are guilty of something. It means you are exercising a right available to represented employees.

You don't need to argue with your supervisor or refuse to cooperate. Simply make your request clearly and professionally, and contact SLOCEA.

The best time to learn about your rights isn't when you're already sitting across the table from management. Know them now, so if that moment comes, you'll know what to do:

If you think a conversation could lead to discipline, ask for representation before answering questions. And when you're unsure, call SLOCEA.

County Healthcare Updates

Changes Coming in 2027

By Brooke
Daphne
Labor
Representative II



On July 16, the Healthcare Committee, composed of representatives from Human Resources, Alliant, and the various County unions met to review the upcoming healthcare renewal and discuss the changes that will affect employee benefits in 2027. While there won't be a significant number of changes to the plan in 2027, there are several items directly impacting County employees regarding coverage, premiums, and other healthcare benefits. The following is a summary of the information disbursed at the July 16 meeting:

CHANGES TO GLP-1 COVERAGE

Beginning in 2027, County insurance will no longer cover GLP-1 medications when prescribed for any purpose besides the treatment of Type 2 Diabetes.

This change was driven largely by the significant and rapidly increasing cost of these medications. Across the PRISM pool, GLP-1 spending reached approximately \$62.1 million (a 72% increase) with GLP-1 medications accounting for roughly one-quarter of overall pharmacy spending.

Approximately 123 San Luis Obispo County plan members are currently using GLP-1 medications. Employees who are affected by this change should carefully review their options and speak with their healthcare provider regarding

alternative treatment options. In some circumstances, HSA or FSA funds may be used for out-of-pocket expenses for GLP-1 prescriptions, however, the IRS requires proof of medical necessity, so use of GLP-1's for weight loss alone would not qualify.

MEDICAL COSTS CONTINUE TO RISE

Alliant shared that increasing healthcare costs have primarily been driven by medical inflation, increased utilization, higher provider and pharmacy costs, staffing shortages, and the growing prevalence of chronic and serious illnesses.

The initial projected increase for the PRISM medical plans was 15.96%.

Following the decision to eliminate coverage for GLP-1 medications prescribed for weight loss, the projected medical increase was reduced to approximately 10.77%.

The rising cost of prescription drugs continues to be a major concern. Pharmacy costs are currently trending upward by approximately 12–14%, with GLP-1 medications representing a significant portion of those costs.

HOW WILL THIS AFFECT CAFETERIA CONTRIBUTIONS?

Under the current MOU, the employer-paid cafeteria contribution increases based on the percentage increase in medical insurance premiums.

Under the MOU, the County contribution increases by the equal percentage of any premium increase up to 10%. Any increase above 10% is then shared 50/50 between the County and employees.

Because the projected increase for 2027 is 10.77%, the employer-paid cafeteria contribution would increase by approximately 10.4%, after applying the 50/50 cost-sharing formula to the amount above 10%. The final contribution amount will be rounded to the nearest dollar.

The 2027 Cafeteria Contributions for SLOCEA-represented units are detailed in the table below:

Plan Type	2027 County Contribution
Employee Only	\$1,053.00
Employee +1	\$1,730.00
Employee +Family	\$2,135.00

DENTAL, VISION, AND LIFE INSURANCE UPDATES

There are several positive developments in other benefit areas:

Dental: Dental rates will increase by 3.8%, with rates guaranteed for two years. The Dental PPO will see a 5.4% increase to help ensure the plan remains sustainable.

Vision: Rates are guaranteed not to increase through 2028.

Life Insurance: VOYA is reducing premiums while increasing the guaranteed issue amount available during open enrollment. Employees will be able to elect up to \$300,000 in supplemental life insurance, without providing evidence of insurability. Employees electing coverage above

the guaranteed amount will still need to complete the required evidence of insurability process.

Delta Dental has also expanded its provider network in the area and is improving its online portal and claims process, including the ability to submit certain out-of-network claims electronically.

Additionally, the County featured an in-network dentist who is currently accepting new patients.

Deborah McNeil-Amorteguy, DDS, is a Delta Dental Premier Provider, conveniently located at 1250 Peach Street in San Luis Obispo. To schedule an appointment or learn more, call 805-543-3016 or click the following link: <https://dramorteguy.com/request-an-appointment/>



Dr. Deborah McNeil-Amorteguy, DDS

EXPANDED HEALTH AND WELLNESS SERVICES

The County is also expanding several healthcare resources.

Carrum Health, which currently provides certain surgery and cancer care benefits, is expanding to

include a substance use disorder treatment program for employees and eligible dependents.

The Employee Health Clinic is also expected to expand services to dependents and extend its operating hours once an additional provider is hired. Expanded hours are anticipated in the near future.

The Committee also discussed placing a greater emphasis on preventative healthcare, particularly cancer screenings. Employees should keep an eye out for additional information and resources regarding preventative care and screening opportunities.

LOOKING AHEAD: A LARGER REVIEW OF MEDICAL COVERAGE

The County is expected to begin a more comprehensive evaluation of medical insurance options for future plan years. While no decisions have been made, the County plans to take a deeper look at available options, with CalPERS among the potential alternatives that may be evaluated.

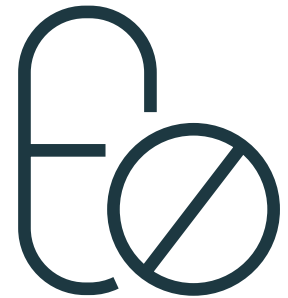
The goal is to conduct a fresh review of the healthcare market and gather employee feedback as the County prepares for future renewals. Any significant changes would most likely occur in 2029 rather than the upcoming 2027 plan year.

IMPORTANT DATES

September 22, 2026: County Health Fair at the Veterans Hall

October 1–16, 2026: Open Enrollment

SLOCEA will continue to monitor these changes and provide members with additional information as it becomes available. As healthcare costs continue to rise, it is important that employees understand how changes to the plans may affect their coverage and have opportunities to provide feedback as the County evaluates future healthcare options.





DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT

Animal Control Officers

Jennifer Tate,
Labor
Representative I



As we leave behind the dog days of summer, September brings several observances recognizing animals and responsible pet ownership, including National Dog Week, Responsible Dog Ownership Month, and Happy Healthy Cat Month. Together, they offer a timely opportunity to recognize County employees whose work protects animals and serves the community year-round.

Animal Control Officers do far more than pick up stray animals. Their work intersects public health, law enforcement, animal welfare, emergency response, and community education.

To learn more about the position, we spoke with Animal Control Officer Nina Moody, who recently celebrated 10 years of County service. Nina has worked with animals in some capacity since high school. After graduation from Cal Poly, she was considering a career working with horses when a college friend encouraged her to apply for the County. The position brought together her love of animals and her longstanding interest in law enforcement.

Her introduction came quickly. During her first week she participated in a large operation in which Animal Services took custody of so many animals that every available truck was filled. She describes the experience as a “baptism by fire,” but it also confirmed how much she enjoyed the work. Ten years later,



Animal Control Officer Nina Moody

she still “absolutely” loves it.

The biggest misconception Nina encounters is that Animal Control Officers are simply “dogcatchers.” The term evokes an old cartoon image of an officer carrying an oversized net and driving a wire-mesh wagon.

“We don’t actually do a whole lot of catching,” she jokes. “Dogs are too fast.” She goes on to tell me a story of following a dog around at a walking pace until it got so tired she was able to collect it before reuniting it with its owner.

While officers respond to loose animals, they also investigate reports of neglect and cruelty, conduct welfare checks, respond to injured or

aggressive animals, follow up on bite reports, document cases, and educate the public, to name a few things.

The animals they encounter are also not limited to dogs and cats. Nina has worked with steers, sheep, goats, pigs, horses, turkeys, a badger, and even a zonkey. The Sheriff’s Office has primary jurisdiction over livestock calls in rural areas, but Animal Services may be called to assist, particularly when an animal must be safely contained, transported, or temporarily housed. Some of these animals have simply escaped from their property, while others are being held during investigations involving suspected neglect or cruelty.

Another major role they play is in rabies prevention. Officers receive bite reports and oversee required quarantines involving many species, not only dogs. Although owners sometimes fear that quarantine means losing their animal, it is generally a standard protocol following a reported bite.

Animal Services also collaborates with law enforcement, fire, emergency medical personnel, and other agencies throughout the County. Through its custodial impound program, officers can take temporary custody of an animal when its owner is unable to provide care because of arrest, hospitalization, mental health crisis, or another emergency.

“People have a limited understanding of what we do and what we’re capable of doing,” she tells me. “I don’t think a lot of people realize they have the ability to reach out to us and ask for assistance in many different situations.”

The work also requires officers to



DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT

That combination of enforcement, education, collaboration, and practical problem solving is why Nina believes the traditional title does not fully capture the position. When I stated that 'Animal Control Officer' sounds like a misnomer for the role she agreed.

"One of my favorite things to do is educate people about what we do, how we can help, and what they're capable of doing within the scope of their jobs," she said, referring specifically to fellow County departments in the latter part of her comment.

Perhaps that is the clearest distinction of all: the position may have "control" in its title, but its purpose is service.



Animal Services Facility

exercise judgment when a situation does not have a simple answer. Nina recalled 'Wolfie,' a dog living independently in an open space in San Luis Obispo while neighborhood residents fed her, provided shelter, and monitored her well-being.

After evaluating the circumstances and considering input from the neighborhood residents, Animal Services determined it was best to allow the neighborhood to continue caring for her as she posed no threat to the community.



LET'S CELEBRATE YOUR HARD WORK

Labor Day is Ours

ENJOY THE DAY OFF BECAUSE YOU DESERVE IT!

THE SLOCEA OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7th

Workplace Harassment 101: What's Against The Law & And What Isn't

Carrie McGrath,
*Labor
Representative I*



Let's be honest:
work can be
full of friction.

A boss who's a little too blunt with feedback. A coworker who gets under your skin. A rough performance evaluation that stings for days. None of that feels great, but none of it is necessarily illegal.

So, where's the line? Under both California and federal law, workplace harassment is a specific legal concept, and knowing the difference between "this is a bad day at work" and "this is against the law" can help you figure out what to do next.

Here's a plain breakdown.

WHAT ACTUALLY COUNTS AS WORKPLACE HARASSMENT?

Legally speaking, harassment isn't just "someone being unpleasant." Its unwelcome conduct tied to a protected characteristic that's either severe or repeated enough to create a hostile, intimidating, or abusive work environment or that results in some kind of negative employment action, like demotion or termination. Petty slights, annoyances, and isolated incidents (unless extremely serious) will not rise to the level of illegality. To be unlawful, conduct must create a work environment that would

be intimidating, hostile, or offensive to reasonable people.

Two layers of law protect you here:

- **Federal law**, primarily Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).
- **California law**, primarily the Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA), enforced by the state's Civil Rights Department (CRD), which tends to cover *more* protected categories and *more* employers than federal law does.

WHAT DOES HARASSMENT ACTUALLY LOOK LIKE?

It shows up in more forms than people expect:

Verbal: slurs, offensive "jokes," name-calling, repeated derogatory comments about a protected trait.

Physical: unwanted touching, blocking someone's path,

intimidating gestures.

Visual: offensive images, memes, or posters; discriminatory symbols shared in emails or chats.

Sexual: unwelcome advances, requests for sexual favors, sexually explicit jokes or materials, or repeated date requests after being turned down.

WHAT'S NOT USUALLY ILLEGAL HARASSMENT

This is the part people often get wrong. The law isn't a general "be nice to me" rule, it targets conduct connected to a protected characteristic. So, the following, while sometimes frustrating, generally *don't* rise to illegal harassment on their own:

- Constructive criticism or a tough performance review
- Personality clashes with a coworker
- Micromanagement
- Rude or insensitive behavior
- Enforcing the same rules on everyone
- One-off disagreements

Protected Characteristics (Federal + California)

Federal (Title VII, ADEA, ADA, etc.)	Also Protected Under California's FEHA
Race or color	Ancestry
Religion	Medical condition
National origin	Gender identity or expression
Sex (including pregnancy)	Sexual orientation
Age (40+)	Marital status
Disability	Genetic information
Genetic information	Military or veteran status

If a boss is a jerk to *everyone* regardless of race, sex, age, disability, etc., that's generally bad management, not illegal harassment or hostile work environment. The moment it's targeted because of who you are, that's when the law gets involved.

THE LEGAL TEST: SEVERE OR PERVASIVE

To cross into unlawful territory,
conduct generally must be:

1. Tied to a protected characteristic, and
2. Severe enough (one serious incident can be enough) or pervasive enough (a repeated pattern) to alter your working conditions or create an abusive environment, and
3. Unwelcome.

LIKELY HARASSMENT:

- A coworker keeps making racial jokes after being asked to stop
- A supervisor repeatedly makes sexual comments toward an employee
- An employee is mocked for a disability on an ongoing basis

PROBABLY NOT HARASSMENT:

- Getting written up for attendance issues
- A disagreement over who covers a shift
- A manager who tracks everyone's output closely

WHAT EMPLOYERS ARE REQUIRED TO DO

Both state and federal law put real obligations on employers, including:

- Keeping the workplace free of harassment
- Taking complaints seriously and investigating promptly and impartially

- Taking corrective action when harassment is confirmed
- Protecting employees from retaliation for reporting harassment or participating in an investigation

Retaliation, being punished for speaking up, is illegal on its own, separate from whether the underlying harassment claim succeeds.

IF YOU THINK YOU'RE EXPERIENCING HARASSMENT

1. Document everything. Dates, times, witnesses, exact words used.
2. Save evidence. Emails, texts, screenshots — whatever's relevant.
3. Report it through your department's internal complaint process.
4. Loop in your SLOCEA Rep if you're a member.
5. Know your deadlines.

Complaints to the EEOC generally must be filed within 180 days of the incident. California's CRD gives you up to three years to file a state complaint. Missing these windows can limit your options, so don't wait.

BOTTOM LINE

Being treated unfairly at work isn't automatically the same as being unlawfully harassed, but when conduct is tied to who you are and is severe or ongoing, the law is on your side, both in California and nationally.

If you're not sure which side of the line your situation falls on, don't try to figure it out alone. **Call SLOCEA**, we'll help you understand your rights, walk through your options, and make sure you have the support you need.



COLLABORATING TO FORM A UNIFIED, WELL-INFORMED, AND ACTIVELY ENGAGED MEMBERSHIP!

Listed by Department

AIRPORT

Ben Franco

BU 01 - San Luis
Obispo Airport
Airport Operations
Specialist

ANIMAL SERVICES

Crystal Cullen

BU 01 - San Luis Obispo
Animal Control Officer

ASSESSOR

Miranda Donaldson

BU 01 - San Luis Obispo
Appraiser II

Chelsea Hendron

BU 01 - San Luis Obispo
Geographic Information
Systems Analyst II

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Sam Cvetovac

BU 01 - Arroyo Grande
Adult Services
Behavioral Health
Clinician II

Savannah Donovan

BU 01 - Paso Robles
- Drug & Alcohol
Behavioral Health
Specialist II

Janet Soto

BU 01 - Arroyo Grande
Youth Services
Behavioral Health
Clinician II

Emma Sturm

BU 01 - Atascadero
Adult Services
Behavioral Health
Clinician II

CLERK-RECORDER

Lucia Maceri

BU 01 - San Luis Obispo
Clerk-Recorder Assistant II

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Beth Raub

BU 05 - San Luis Obispo
Victim Witness Supervisor

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Allen Dailey

BU 01 - San Luis Obispo
Geographic Information
Systems Analyst III

LIBRARY

Chelsea Cutler

BU 01 - San Luis Obispo
Library Associate III

Rosa Flores

BU 01 - San Luis Obispo
Library Associate III

Kate Mitchell

BU 01 - Arroyo Grande
Librarian

PLANNING AND BUILDING

Angela Garcia

BU 01 - San Luis Obispo
Building Plans Examiner I

PROBATION

Esther Santiago

BU 13 - San Luis Obispo
Departmental Personnel
Technician

PUBLIC HEALTH

Norma Domingo

BU 13 - San Luis Obispo
Accounting Technician

Elizabeth Farrington

BU 01 - San Luis Obispo
Public Health
Microbiologist I

Kelsey Quetsch

BU 01 - San Luis Obispo
Environmental Health
Specialist I

SHERIFF-CORONER

Crissie Danley

BU 13 - Records
& Warrants
Legal Clerk II

SOCIAL SERVICES

Heather Griffin

BU 01 - Arroyo Grande
Employment Resource
Specialist III

Freddy Hernandez

BU 01 - San Luis Obispo
Program Review Specialist

Nate Larsen

BU 05 - Paso Robles
Employment Services
Supervisor

Mark McCullough

BU 01 - Nipomo
Employment Resource
Specialist III

Thomas McGarvey

BU 05 - San Luis Obispo
Employment Services
Supervisor

Rita Villaseñor

BU 01 - Paso Robles
Employment Resource
Specialist III

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A WAY TO GET INVOLVED WITH SLOCEA, CONSIDER BECOMING A STEWARD

ELIGIBILITY: You must be a SLOCEA member for at least one year.

As a Steward you will:

- Gain a deeper understanding of your rights as a public employee.
- Learn how to be an advocate and source of information in your workplace.

To learn more, please contact Brooke Daphne or Carrie McGrath at info@slocea.org or 805-543-2021.



HUMAN RESOURCES

Learning & Development Center Newsletter
September Blade 2026

CONVERSATIONS WITH LEADERSHIP

Please join us for our next Conversations with Leadership in October. This is a unique opportunity to hear from two County Department Heads about their journeys to executive leadership, lessons learned, and successes along the way. Stay tuned for further details in upcoming newsletters. We hope to see you there!

AVAILABLE CLASSES

CLICK THE LINKS BELOW TO ENROLL IN UPCOMING CLASSES

- New Employee Orientation - September 9th - 9:00am-4:30pm
- Red Cross Adult and Pediatric First Aid/CPR/AED - Sept 18st - 9:30am-12:00pm
- Red Cross Adult and Pediatric First Aid/CPR/AED - Sept 18th - 1:00pm-3:30pm
- Discover your Strengths - Sept 22nd - 1:00pm-4:00pm

Webinars

[EAP Webinar - Secrets to Planning a Successful Retirement - Sept 16th - 10:00am](#)

Tools and Resources

In case you need a refresh!

- [Mentorship Toolkit](#)
- [New Employee Toolkit](#)
- [Onboarding for Supervisors Toolkit](#)
- [Strengths Toolkit](#)
- [Supervisor Toolkit](#)
- [Training Liaisons Toolkit](#)

ARE YOU A SUPERVISOR?

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER FOR A SUPERVISOR ROADMAP MEETING](#)

THIS OPPORTUNITY IS DESIGNED FOR BOTH NEW AND EXPERIENCED SUPERVISORS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN LEARNING ABOUT THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT THEM IN THEIR ROLE. THE LDC TEAM WILL ALSO PROVIDE INSIGHTS ON HOW TO CONTINUE GROWING PROFESSIONALLY THROUGH TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES.

THIS IS A ONE-HOUR MEETING THAT CAN BE HELD EITHER IN PERSON OR VIA TEAMS—YOUR CHOICE! WE HOPE TO SEE YOU SOON.

Open Enrollment

October 2-16, 2026!

County Benefits Team

Open Enrollment is your annual opportunity to review your benefits and ensure your coverage continues to meet your needs.

Any changes made will be effective January 1, 2027.

While many benefits will remain the same, continue reading to review several important updates and enhancements.

REMINDERS

During Open Enrollment, you can:

- Change medical and/or dental plan
- Waive County medical insurance with Proof of Other Group Coverage
- Add or remove dependents from medical, dental, and vision plans
- Add, drop, increase, or decrease ancillary coverages
- Elect a tax savings account
- Update mobile phone, email, and address

If you do not act during Open Enrollment, your current benefits will automatically roll over, except waiving medical coverage or funding a tax savings account.

If you waive County medical coverage, you must provide Proof of Other Group Coverage in BenXcel.net. Review your [MOU](#) for Proof of Other Group Coverage eligibility and requirements for waiving County medical insurance.



HOW TO ENROLL

To complete your 2027 Open Enrollment, login at [BenXcel.net](https://benxcel.net). Visit our webpage for the single-sign-on link, slocounty.ca.gov/oe.

UPCOMING EVENTS

We have events throughout September and October to support you during Open Enrollment season!

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS FAIR –

Join us at the Veteran's Hall to learn more about your comprehensive benefits, be entered to win exciting raffle prizes, and come home with some cool vendor swag! September 22, 11:00 – 2:00 PM.

BENXCEL WORKSHOP –

Need help navigating BenXcel enrollment elections and uploading required documentation? The Benefits Team

will be able to help on October 7 & 15 in the Govt Center, Room 361.

BENEFITS 1:1 – Schedule a Teams call to the Benefits Team for support with making your benefit elections! Available October 8 & 14.

WEBINARS

Join your Benefits Team for a variety of topics this Open Enrollment.

YOUR GUIDE TO BETTER

DIGESTIVE HEALTH WITH

ACCOLADE 2ND MD AND

CYLINDER - Learn how to better understand and manage your digestive health with expert insights, practical guidance, and personalized support from Accolade 2nd.MD and Cylinder. September 15, 11:00 AM Sign up [here](#).

OE BASIC WEBINAR – Learn all the basics of your benefits offerings

to prepare for Open Enrollment. September 16, 10:30 AM. Sign up [here](#).

LIFE INSURANCE BASICS WITH VOYA WEBINAR – Voya benefits can help protect what matters most. Discover new Voya benefits available to you. September 23, 12:00 PM. Sign up [here](#).

HEALTH AND DEPENDENT CARE FSA WEBINAR – Benefits team is hosting this event on everything you need to know and FSAs and Dependent Care FSAs. Learn how funding these pre-tax accounts can help save you money on eligible expenses. September 29, 1:00 PM. Sign up [here](#).

HIGH DEDUCTIBLE & HEALTH SAVINGS PLAN OVERVIEW – We'll explain how the County's HDHP works and how it pairs with an HSA to save on qualifying medical expenses. October 1, 10:00 AM. Sign up [here](#).

If you do not act during Open Enrollment, your current benefits will automatically roll over, except waving medical coverage or funding a tax savings account.

ID CARDS

ID cards are issued for medical and pharmacy.

Blue Shield of California: You will receive a Blue Shield ID card if you are enrolling in a medical plan for the first time or changing to a new medical plan. ID cards are issued only in the name of the subscriber and mailed in the second week of December.

RESOURCES

Additional Open Enrollment information, such as 2027 cafeteria and premiums, are available at: slocounty.ca.gov/oe.



AUGUST'S FIND FEATHERS WINNERS!



1. Maria Woodworth - Probation Dept
2. Elizabeth Farrington - Public Health
3. Jennifer Nickett - Dept Social Services
4. Patricia Rios - Public Health
5. Chelsea Cutler - Library

Retired Or Retiring?

You Need A Plan

(Part 1)

Dennis Johnson,
SLOCREA Treasurer



A close friend and neighbor of mine just retired after many years of teaching. She was looking forward to her retirement and once she made it, reality set in and now she is trying to figure out what she really wants to do for the rest of her life. Do you know?

DO YOU HAVE A VIABLE, SUSTAINABLE PLAN?

When I was starting my career in public service, I was given options to put money away towards my retirement, etc. Of course, at that time my wife and I were wanting to start a family, buy a home, etc. Even with both of us working, finances were extremely tight. Living paycheck to paycheck, how could we afford to take money out of our much-needed finances to pay our future us? That was our thought at that time.

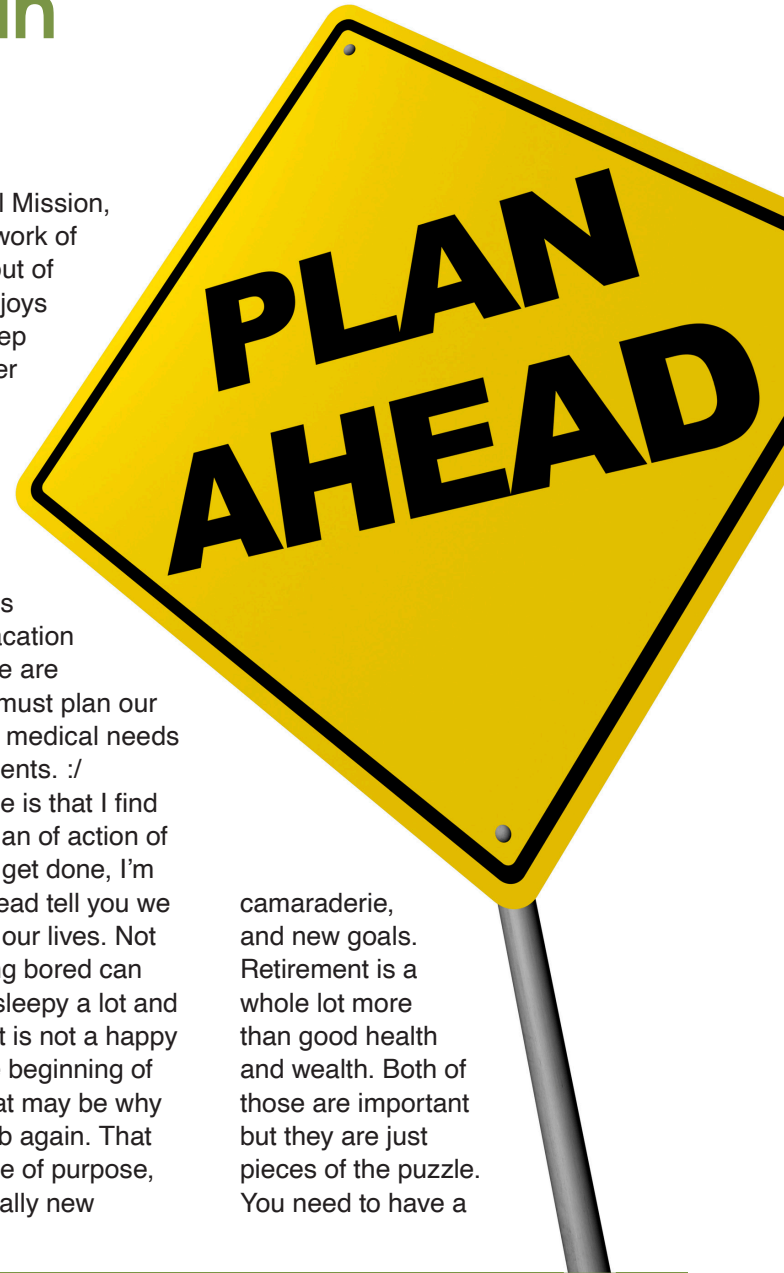
It took my wife and I years of hard work and saving for our desires to become our reality, but our choices back then and through the years that followed are what have given us our current lifestyle and 'comfort zone.' We did start a retirement fund later in our careers, which we are thankful we did, but we feel we did the best we could with what we worked for.

Both my wife and I are finally retired after over 40 years each in our professions. At the time of this writing, she has been retired for about five years and me three years. My wife has no regrets. She

volunteers at the local Mission, and she does her artwork of making bird feeders out of vintage glass. She enjoys this and that helps keep her busy. I on the other hand miss part of the work environment yet don't miss other parts. I mostly miss the camaraderie with my coworkers and staff. I do not miss having to schedule vacation times. But now that we are older, sometimes we must plan our lives and trips around medical needs and various appointments. :/

But what amazes me is that I find that if I don't have a plan of action of what I want to do and get done, I'm bored. Books I have read tell you we need to have goals in our lives. Not having goals and being bored can lead to being tired or sleepy a lot and even depression. That is not a happy retirement. That is the beginning of a death sentence. That may be why many retirees get a job again. That job gives them a sense of purpose, being needed, potentially new

camaraderie, and new goals. Retirement is a whole lot more than good health and wealth. Both of those are important but they are just pieces of the puzzle. You need to have a



ABOUT SLOCREA

Everyone who receives a pension from Pension Trust is eligible to join. First year is free, then dues are \$15.00 per year or \$40.00 for 3 years. Such a deal!

We are an all volunteer organization. Each year we have 3 lunch meetings with a speaker, one holiday luncheon with entertainment, and one BBQ/potluck picnic (outdoors).

www.slocreea.org

plan of what you want to accomplish and when you want it completed.

For those still working, what thoughts and goals do you have for when you retire? (I would assume your goals would include your income vs your expenses, maybe where you would live geographically to

include still living in the same place or downsizing, and if you have kids or even grandchildren will you move closer to them?) The list is endless. However, a key question you should ask and then answer is what would you do to keep yourself active so as to allow yourself self-worth?

For those already retired, what goals do you have in your life now to keep you busy, focused, and to make your time worthwhile?

There are a couple books that I will tell you about in the next SLOCREA blast.

Stay tuned.



NATIVE AMERICAN DAY

The SLOCEA office will be closed Friday, September 25th

Service Anniversaries & New Members

The following County, Courts and LOCSD employees will reach a significant service anniversary during the month of SEPTEMBER. We list those employees who have reached their 5th, 10th, 15th and higher years of employment. These anniversaries represent the hire date of our members, not time in service accumulation.

Congratulations to these employees for their years of service!

SEPTEMBER SERVICE ANNIVERSARIES

First Name	Last Name	Department	Years Of Service	First Name	Last Name	Department	Years Of Service
Manuel	Mendoza Calderon	Agricultural Commissioner	28	Elizabeth	Raub	District Attorney	10
Lisa	Murray	Sheriff-Coroner	27	Ashley	Rankin	Department Social Services	10
Dolores	Rincon	Superior Court	27	Jocelyn	Zacapa	Department Social Services	10
Kimberly	Phillips	Superior Court	27	Kate	Mitchell	Library	10
Randy	Reddell	District Attorney	27	Cathleen	Bellovary	Department Social Services	10
Nicola	Glanville	Behavioral Health	25	Jana	Cearley	Behavioral Health	10
Elizabeth	Kavanaugh	Parks	24	Jamila	Brown	Clerk-Recorder	10
Bert	Hall	Public Works	23	Yvette	Mason	Veterans Services	10
Katherine	Perry	Department Social Services	23	Traci	Corbin	Department Social Services	10
Mathew	Ptacek	Auditor-Contrlr-Treas-Tax-Coll	22	Monica	Solis	Department Social Services	10
Heather	Miranda	Behavioral Health	22	Shannon	LaPalm	Public Health	5
Cindy	VanderWielen-Vieyra	Public Health	21	Anna	Zailik	Department Social Services	5
Jennifer	Finocchio	Department Social Services	19	Claire	McNamara	Department Social Services	5
Lucia	Martinez	Public Health	19	Marisol	Viveros	Department Social Services	5
Danielle	Holmes	Public Health	19	Julie	Mack	Airports	5
Louise	Tobin	Department Social Services	19	Elizabeth	Gonzalez	Department Social Services	5
Kristin	Rank	Department Social Services	18	Evelyn	Schnadarle	Public Health	5
Celeste	Ward	Department Social Services	18	Jodario	Ramirez	Department Social Services	5
Nicole	Ermocida	Parks	18	Alyssa	Rabener	Department Social Services	5
Nathaniel	Pall	LOCSD	16	Travis	McGraw	Behavioral Health	5
Jessa	Ripley	Central Services	16				

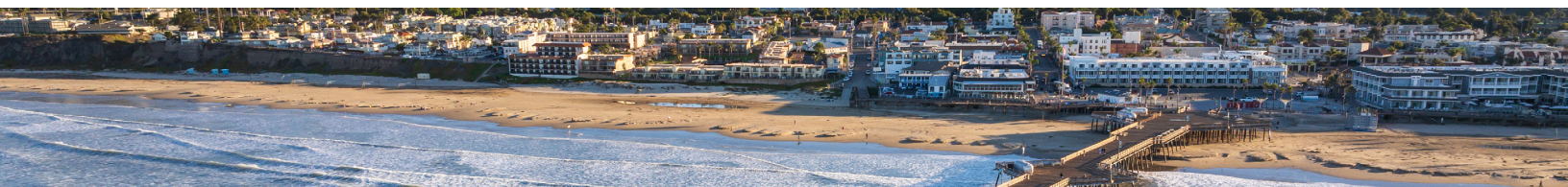
WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Name	Department	Name	Department
Erin Kellermann	AG Commissioner	Ericka Scott	Dept Social Services
Ian McLellan	AG Commissioner	Isaac Hickey	Dept Social Services
Yselle Rios Magallon	Airports	Megan Flaming	Dept Social Services
Mayra Ledesma	Aud-Cont-Trea-Tax-Coll	Jessica Anderson	Dept Social Services
Candace Hedding	Aud-Cont-Trea-Tax-Coll	Soul Berna	Parks
Ceirra Miller	Behavioral Health	Kerin Bennett	Probation Dept
Maria Guevara	Behavioral Health	Coral Miner	Public Works
Amaia Kennedy	Behavioral Health	Delfina Navarro-Estrada	Public Works
Taylor Williams	Central Services	Gwen Gipe	Sheriff-Coroner
Edith Puga	Dept Social Services	Logan Lubin	Sheriff-Coroner

ASSOCIATION COMMITTEES

SLOCEA Board of Directors

- Executive Committee
- Personnel Committee
- Finance Committee
- Bylaws Committee
- Members Benefit Committee
- Academic Scholarship Committee
- Summer Childcare Committee
- SLOCEA Political Action Committee (SLO PAC)
- Steward Committee
- County Healthcare Committee: Four Bargaining Unit Delegates
- Strike Committee



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS!

First Name Last Name	Birthday	First Name Last Name	Birthday	First Name Last Name	Birthday
Barbara Duesenberg-Prior	09/01	Kurru Wannagat	09/11	Paloma Hernandez Basulto	09/21
Idania Garcia Pedraza	09/01	Anita Jankovitz	09/11	James Trout	09/22
Stephanie Soria	09/01	Nora Kelly	09/11	Sean Gabriel	09/22
Lavinder Bagdwal	09/01	Natalie Quinteros	09/11	Jana Cearley	09/22
Jennifer Franklin	09/01	Sylvia Moreno Chavez	09/11	Casey Morasci	09/23
Naomi Garcia Banuelos	09/01	Diana Magallon Mata	09/12	Jaime Ballew	09/23
Gabriela Ramos	09/02	Ike Wilder	09/12	Maricarmen Silva	09/24
Stephanie Butterfield	09/03	Natasha Delacruz	09/12	Jon Mendez	09/24
Alma Ramirez	09/03	Wahida Abdeen-Poncelet	09/12	Brennon Story	09/25
Katherine Treacy	09/03	Tomoko Rhoat	09/12	Robert Pierce	09/25
Chula Horvath	09/04	Niki Bonetti	09/12	Nina Moody	09/25
Araceli Cortez Garcia	09/04	Christine Hoffman	09/14	Karen Reyes	09/25
Christie Castro	09/04	Amy Webster	09/14	Ty Fuentes	09/25
Veatrice Gallagher	09/04	Dona Reed	09/14	Kelly Meyer	09/25
Timothy Bowker	09/05	Erendira Ubias	09/14	Christopher Jaeger	09/25
Christina Ley	09/05	Joy Ecklund	09/14	Richard Molloy	09/25
Sheila Wolpert	09/05	Elina Landin	09/15	Jessica Villegas	09/25
Elizabeth Bunce	09/05	Jocelyn Leonard	09/15	Vanessa Harris	09/26
Mitchell Rich	09/05	Katrina Erwin	09/15	Anne Harris	09/26
Daniel Grimes	09/06	Darice Slusser	09/15	Viviana Meza	09/27
Mandee Culbert	09/06	Kevin Murphy	09/15	Nino Kordic	09/27
Jill Anderson	09/07	Corla Wade	09/15	Jorge Reyes Valtierra	09/27
Lauren Thane	09/07	Mark Schaffer	09/16	Denise Anderson	09/28
Lindsay Post	09/07	Joel Almas	09/16	Abigail Patterson	09/28
Guadalupe Sanchez	09/07	Nathaniel Larsen	09/17	Susana Alvarez Hascall	09/28
Laura Drenth	09/07	Nathan Asher	09/17	Lenny Cridebring	09/28
Barbara Leaders	09/08	Shelby Lloyd	09/17	Lawrence Olivas	09/28
Wendy Hudson	09/08	Breanne Salmon	09/17	Charles Riha	09/28
Louise Tobin	09/08	Lauren Sanchez	09/18	Edith Garcia	09/29
Taylor Williams	09/08	Matthew Giuffrida	09/19	Marycruz Salinas	09/29
Rosa Tapia-Carranza	09/08	Adrieanna Stevens	09/19	Michael Hedrick	09/29
Marisol Mariscal	09/08	Hailey Razo	09/19	Michelle Lewis	09/30
Casey Wilcox	09/09	Jesse Poe	09/19	Samantha Stouff	09/30
Emily Davenport	09/09	Laura Wells	09/19	Cathleen Bellovary	09/30
Manuel Mendoza Calderon	09/09	Priscilla Sisommout	09/20	Amanda Knauer	09/30
Yselle Rios Magallon	09/09	Thomas Crotogini	09/20	Princess Charlotte Butay	09/30
Emily Gray	09/09	Sahara Zubia	09/20		
Sarah Mendoza	09/10	Martha Keosababian	09/20		
Sally LaPorte	09/10	Sydney Luna	09/20		
Cristina Cantu	09/10	Oscar Cortez	09/21		
Paterese Reynolds	09/10	Kevin Atnip	09/21		
Robert Sproston	09/11	Lauren Anaya	09/21		

If your birth date is not listed above it is because we do not have it in our database. Please help us keep our records up to date by contacting us at 805-543-2021.

DON'T MISS THESE MEETINGS!

SLOCEA Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday, September 16, 2026 @ 5:45pm.
Contact the SLOCEA office for the zoom link.

SLO County Board of Supervisors Meetings

All meetings are conducted in person at the BOS Chambers. Watch online by going to the County's home page and clicking "Watch Live Video".

Tuesday, September 1, 2026 @ 9:00 AM
Tuesday, September 29, 2026 @ 9:00 AM

SLOCREA Meetings

Oct. 6th Contact SLOCREA for more information.

SLO County Pension Trust Board Of Trustees Meeting

September 28 @ 9:30am in the BOS Chambers



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- Hospital Stay Coverage
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San Luis Obispo County Employees Association



AMBA

IMPORTANT INFORMATION & LINKS TO KNOW



Survivor's Endowment Grant

San Luis Obispo County Employees' Association
Survivor's Endowment Grant Program
Enrollment and Recipient Designation Form

As a benefit of Association membership, every SLOCEA member in good standing may enroll in the Association's Survivor's Endowment Grant Program. The program currently pays a \$2,000 cash grant, upon the death of the member, to the member's designated recipient ("Grant Designee"). Although this is an insurance program, the "Grant Designee" is similar to a beneficiary for a life insurance policy. Enrollment in the Survivor's Endowment Grant Program is **not** free to SLOCEA members. To enroll, please complete and return this form to the Association office via any of the following methods:

- Submit digitally via DocuSign
- Fax to 805-543-4020
- Mail to 1055 Walnut Street, San Luis Obispo 93401
- Email to info@slocea.org

IMPORTANT:
This section **MUST** be completed and returned

To enroll in the Association's Survivor's Endowment Grant Program, this form must be completed by the member and returned to the Association. Please fill in all the information requested and sign the form as indicated below.

Member's Name	Member's Job
Member's Address	Member's Phone
Member's City/Zip	Member's Date of Birth
Member's Email Address	

Grant Designee (Must be a legal resident of California)	Relationship to Member
Grant Designee Phone	Grant Designee Email Address
Member's Signature	Date of Signature

Attorney Referral List SLOCEA Legal Services Program

Attorney Referral List
SLOCEA LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM

This program is available exclusively to SLOCEA members and their families, and provides low-cost legal services for assistance on non-work related legal issues.

This program has no annual fee or enrollment costs. When you call the attorney of your choice to make an appointment, identify yourself as a member of the San Luis Obispo County Employees' Association in order to receive your exclusive special offer. If you have any questions or need the additional information, call us at 805-543-2021.

PARTICIPATING ATTORNEYS:

Law Office of Doreen B. Curtis, PC 3275 Santa Rosa Avenue, Suite 100, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401 Phone: 805-468-8884 Email: dcurtis@dbcurtis.com Areas of Practice: Estate Planning, Trusts, Guardianship, Conservatorship, Business Formation & Contracts Special Offer: • One 45-minute initial consult (includes document review) • 10% discount on all other hourly fees • Free 1-hour initial consultation by phone or in-office	Stallberg & Tatum 720 Santa Rosa St., Suite 100, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401 Phone: 805-544-9416 Email: info@stallbergandtatum.com Areas of Practice: General Business, Product Liability, Medical & General Malpractice, Construction Law Special Offer: • One 45-minute initial consult • 10% discount on hourly fees • 10% discount on flat fee cases • No discount on out-of-pocket fees (e.g., filing fees)
Law Office of Stephen M. Stone, PC 1117 First Street, Suite 200, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401 Phone: 805-544-6287 Email: stephen@stephenstone.com Areas of Practice: Estate Planning, Real Estate, Debt Collection Special Offer: • One 45-minute initial consult • 10% discount on hourly fees • 10% discount on flat fee cases • No discount on out-of-pocket fees (e.g., filing fees)	Law Office of Stephanie A. Rubin 1000 Santa Rosa Avenue, Suite 100, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401 Phone: 805-428-5288 Email: stephanie@stephanierubin.com Areas of Practice: Real Estate, Personal Injury, Product Liability, Real Estate Property Disputes Special Offer: • One 45-minute initial consult • 10% discount on hourly fees • 10% discount on flat fee cases • No discount on out-of-pocket fees (e.g., filing fees)

AMBA Discounts

As a SLOCEA member, enjoy exclusive discounts on travel, electronics, household items, entertainment & dining, and more!

Click here to download the form

Click here to download the list

Click here to get started!

YOUR RIGHT TO REPRESENTATION

- If you are called in to a meeting with management, you have the **RIGHT** to know the subject of the meeting.
- If you **reasonably believe** the meeting could lead to discipline, you have the **RIGHT** to representation by SLOCEA. **You must ask for that right.** Management **DOES** not have to offer it to you.
- You have the **RIGHT** to consultation with your SLOCEA representative before the meeting.

When in doubt, call your SLOCEA representative at 805-543-2021.



SLOCEA

805-543-2021 • www.slocea.org
605 Santa Rosa St., San Luis Obispo, 93401

