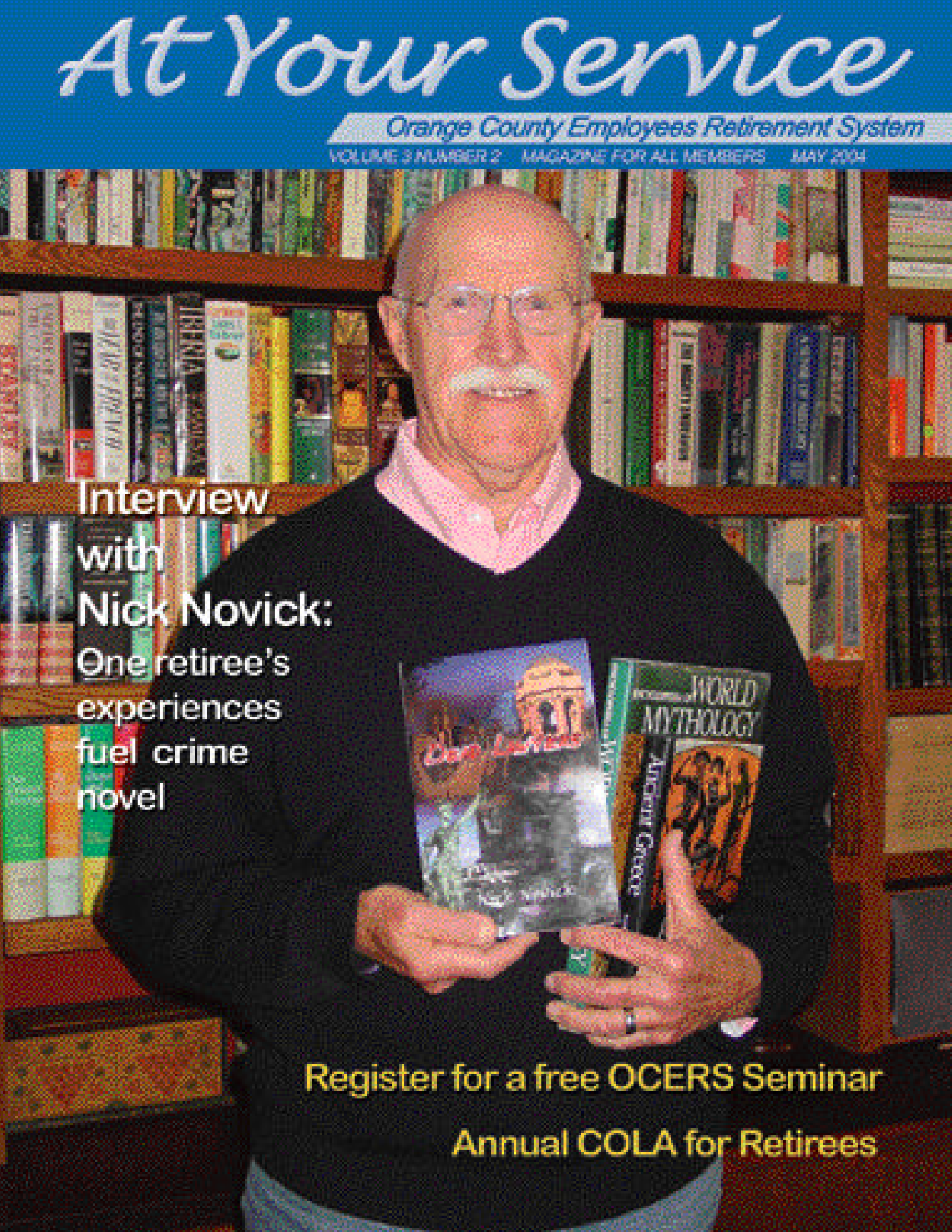


At Your Service

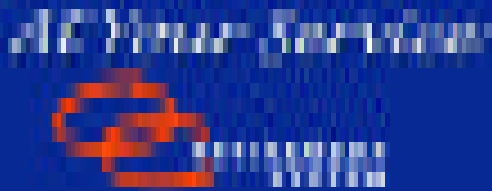
Orange County Employees Retirement System

VOLUME 3 NUMBER 2 MAGAZINE FOR ALL MEMBERS MAY 2004



Interview
with
Nick Novick:
One retiree's
experiences
fuel crime
novel

Register for a free OCERS Seminar
Annual COLA for Retirees



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At Your Service is published for members and retirees of the Orange County Employees Retirement System.

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At Your Service is written and designed by Robert Kinsler, Jayne Ritchey and Cuong Nguyen.

Board of Retirement Meetings:
All regular business meetings are held in OCERS Board Room at 8:30 a.m.

April 19, 2004	May 17, 2004
June 21, 2004	July 19, 2004
August 30, 2004	October 18, 2004
November 15, 2004	December 20, 2004

Ricki Parker brings service and smile to Member Services post

In order to continue to improve customer service for more than 22,000 active and deferred members, as well as more than 9,100 retirees, OCERS has promoted Ricki Parker to the position of Member Services Supervisor.

Before assuming her new position on April 2, 2004, Parker had served as Disability Coordinator at OCERS.

"It's essential to have a well-trained staff to help us meet the ever-changing needs of our members," said Parker, who worked as both a service representative and claims representative for the Social Security Administration before coming to OCERS in December 2000.



In addition to her extensive experience in OCERS' Member Services Division and working for Social Security, Parker earned her bachelor's in business administration at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.

"We want to improve customer service, update our phone system and focus on training staff," Parker explained.

Indeed, recent changes have provided for a number of new retirement formulas that are being adopted by various employers ("Plan Sponsors") that make for increased challenges for specialists and technicians at OCERS.

"We are going to begin holding a training day one day a month to focus on providing our staff with the tools to provide more customized service to all of our members," Parker said.

'Divorce and Your Retirement' Seminar summer dates now open

OCERS' Legal Division will offer general information about how a divorce may impact your retirement benefits at a one-session seminar titled "**Divorce and Your Retirement**" scheduled to be held twice this summer. It will be held on the following dates and times:

- **Tuesday, June 15, 2004; 8 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.**
- **Tuesday, August 17, 2004; 1:30 p.m. – 3 p.m.**

The seminar focuses on how OCERS handles divorce materials and what types of court orders comply with the retirement plan. The OCERS legal staff cannot offer legal advice on your specific rights under California community property laws.

However, an informative hour-long presentation will be followed by a 30-minute question and answer session to address any general questions that members may have.

The seminar is free and open to all active members, retirees and deferred members. The seminar will be held at OCERS, 2223 E. Wellington Ave., Santa Ana.

Space is limited and reservations are required. To reserve a space go to www.ocers.org and click on "Retirement Seminars." Free materials relating to the presentation will be distributed at the seminar.

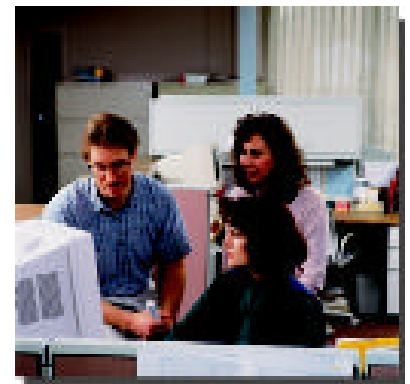


www.ocers.org; your first stop on the World Wide Web

Going online?

Then log on to www.ocers.org to learn more about retirement, disability, death and survivor benefits offered by OCERS to members. OCERS' official Web site provides a wealth of information and services for anyone with access to the World Wide Web. One of the most popular features at OCERS' site is the Benefits Calculator, which allows any member to get a fast estimate of their projected retirement allowance based on their current salary, age and years of service. No registration is required and it only takes a few seconds to complete the easy-to-use form.

In addition, members can now register to take any of a variety of free seminars offered by OCERS through the Web site. Other features at www.ocers.org include the monthly online newsletter OCERS Extra, a printable version of OCERS' official Power of Attorney form for those who want to designate someone to look after their retirement account if they become unable to look after their own needs, as well as a Beneficiary Change form.



Financial Strategy Seminars help prepare for future

If you are planning to retire within the next 3 to 30 years, you should plan to attend one of the following Financial Strategies for Retirement Planning Seminars held at:

**OCERS (Training Room)
2223 E. Wellington Avenue
Santa Ana, CA 92701**

The Financial Strategies for Retirement Planning Seminar consists of a three-session workshop. Each meeting will cover important topics for successful planning; individuals and couples are welcome to attend. The third meeting concentrates on information from an OCERS Retirement Program Specialist.

The seminar is free and there is plenty of free on-site parking for those attending. Various topics of interest and importance will be covered over the course of the three-session workshop.

Among the important topics covered in the comprehensive three-session workshop:

- Deferred Compensation investment choices
- Tax-free and low-cost investing for profit
- How to determine retirement goals
- Investment choices to consider in the current stock market

The third meeting of each workshop focuses on information relating to OCERS, including such topics as:

- Eligibility for Retirement
- Reciprocal Benefits
- Benefit Calculations, and how to apply for your retirement benefits from OCERS

Don't miss out on this valuable information. It will help you prepare for your future. The seminars are free, but reservations are required. To make your reservation to attend this seminar, please log on at www.ocers.org and click on "Retirement Seminars."

An important note: anyone registering for the Financial Strategy Seminar should plan on attending all three sessions. For more information on upcoming Financial Strategies for Retirement Planning Seminars, please call Catie Moore at Financial Management Specialists, (714) 704-6502.

SCHEDULED DATES:

The Financial Strategy Seminar is a three-session workshop, and persons signing up should plan on attending all three sessions of the Workshop.

Dates are as follows:

Workshop
Wednesdays
May 5, 12, and 19, 2004
6-9:30 p.m.

Workshop
Wednesdays
June 2, 9, and 16, 2004
6-9:30 p.m.

Workshop
Wednesdays
July 14, 21 and 28, 2004
6-9:30 p.m.

OCERS offers Pre-Retirement Planning Seminars

When it comes to retirement planning, it's never too early – or too late – to get started.

In fact, a comprehensive study completed by New York University economist and wealth expert Edward Wolff in spring 2002 found that more than 40 percent of households headed by someone between the ages of 47 and 64 will not be able to replace even half of their pre-retirement income once they stop working. In addition, a 2001 study conducted by Aon Consulting and Georgia State University determined that people need between 74 and 83 percent of their pre-retirement income to preserve their standard of living in retirement.

So no matter when you plan to retire, it's important to attend a Pre-Retirement Planning Seminar offered by OCERS.

The few hours you spend at the seminar can have beneficial and long-lasting impacts on your quality of life after you retire.

The Pre-Retirement Planning Seminar is held twice a month at OCERS, 2223 E. Wellington Ave., Santa Ana, and includes a presentation by an OCERS Retirement Program Specialist.

The one-session, five-hour seminar is free and there is plenty of free on-site parking for those attending.

Various topics of interest and importance to you will be covered. A representative from “Deferred Compensation” will be addressing options for withdrawing funds from your 457 plan; a Social Security representative will discuss your Social Security benefits; a representative from Retiree Medical will discuss medical benefit options; and an OCERS Retirement Specialist will focus on your OCERS retirement plan. Among the topics covered by the OCERS representative:

- When you are eligible for retirement
- How to determine your future monthly benefit from OCERS
- How to determine OCERS-related benefits for your beneficiaries
- When should new retirees expect their first retirement check
- Reciprocal benefits for employees who have worked for two or more retirement systems
- How to schedule an appointment with an OCERS Retirement Program Specialist
- Documents you will need to bring when you come to your retirement appointment at OCERS

Don't miss out on this valuable information. It will help you prepare for your future. The seminars are free, but reservations are required. For more information and to make your reservation to attend this seminar, please log on at www.ocers.org and click on “Retirement Seminars.”

SCHEDULED DATES:

These one-session seminars will be held from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays.

Dates are as follows:

May 5, 2004

May 19, 2004

June 2, 2004

June 16, 2004

July 7, 2004

July 21, 2004

Legal and criminal minds meet in retiree's novel

What do Greek mythology, scuba diving, adoption, the criminal justice system and Orange County have in common?

All are among the many key elements that help bring depth and real world detail to an exciting novel penned by OCERS retiree Nick Novick, who worked for the Orange County District Attorney's Office for 18 years before retiring in 1986.

"Dead Lawyers" is the first novel completed and published by Novick, who grew up in a small mining town in eastern Pennsylvania. The story revolves around a serial killer, using the Greek god Hermes as his alter ego, who is targeting criminal defense lawyers and the Orange County criminal prosecutor who is working with law enforcement to catch the killer.

Area readers will appreciate the Orange County setting where the whodunit unfolds. Irvine, Costa Mesa, Santa Ana and Newport Beach are among the communities where the fast-paced thriller unfolds.

"I always like to read a book with a locale I've been to, so I chose Orange County for that reason. I've had many readers who have talked with me afterwards, [who said] having placed the locale in Orange County made it much more interesting." "Dead Lawyers" was published in 2003 (ISBN: 1-4033-4978-9) and is available for order at all Barnes & Noble stores, as well as through online sites such as Amazon.com and Borders.com.

Tired of the cold winters, Novick and his wife Lila moved to Southern California in 1953; the couple have lived in Irvine since the mid-1970s. In a recent interview, the author explained that "Dead Lawyers" involves the criminal justice system in a way never before portrayed in a novel.

Novick's fictional tale presents defense attorneys, prosecutors and even criminals as fully-defined and three-dimensional characters. For example, when Novick decided to have the first murder occur underwater, he did research on rebreathers, equipment that eliminates surface bubbles from a scuba diver, at an area dive shop.

"Once you know what you wish to do [in terms of telling a story], it's not difficult to find the answers," said Novick.

"You may find you're wrong and start over, but when I started the thing about electrocution and the copper bulb, I was visiting our son-in-law and he's a mathematical-theoretical physicist. I told him what I wanted to do and he laid it all out for me." Novick has two daughters and two grandchildren.

Before sending "Dead Lawyers" off to be published in 2002, Novick recalls his own decision to edit the manuscript. "I took out about 30 pages of description just to make it read faster; I did the cutting just before I mailed it in for printing," explained Novick, adding it took him about eight months to write his novel.

He dedicates "Dead Lawyers" to his wife Lila. "I was working on two other books at the time," said Novick, who didn't begin writing seriously until about five years after he retired from his position as a Deputy District Attorney.

"They were more involved and I wasn't getting a consistent amount of time to work on them. After returning from a trip to Canada, I said I need to do something to get a novel finished so I feel I've accomplished something instead of these two books I've been working on. So I asked [Lila] for ideas and she said, 'Since you're always complaining about criminal defense lawyers, why don't you have a serial killer using them as victims?' Well, my first response was I better get it done fast because I'm sure there is some criminal defense lawyer griping to his wife about District Attorneys and his wife is saying, 'Why don't you have some serial killer killing criminal prosecutors.' So, I got right down to it and wrote it."

With Orange County increasingly favored by Hollywood producers in movies and television shows, "Dead Lawyers" may enjoy a life beyond the printed page.

"It's written sort of like a movie script. It wouldn't be hard to turn into a script," Novick said.

'Direct Deposit' is the fastest, safest way to get paid

The Orange County Employees Retirement System is committed to ensuring that all retirees receive their monthly check as quickly as possible.

Electronic Fund Transfer - also known as "Direct Deposit" or "Automatic Deposit" - provides retirees with the fastest delivery of their monthly retirement check.

For those who move frequently or find it difficult to get to the bank, they may find Direct Deposit to be a convenient way to make sure that their monthly check gets deposited. Indeed, by mail it can take more than a week to get your check. In addition, Direct Deposit is a sure way to avoid the risk of a retirement check being stolen or lost in the mail.

Consider these reasons for having your OCERS retirement check deposited electronically right into your bank account:

- It is the fastest method of getting your money to you; the money is available on the first business day of the month.
- As part of "Tips to Reduce Mail Theft," the United States Postal Service recommends that employees have their regular income checks deposited electronically right into their bank account via Direct Deposit. A report on the Postal Service Web site notes that Postal Inspectors arrested 6,364 suspects for mail theft in 2001.
- All retirees with Direct Deposit will receive a monthly automatic deposit receipt, showing the amount of money deposited and any deductions.
- Approximately 90 percent of OCERS retirees now receive their monthly retirement check via Direct Deposit.

"It is always a good idea to use Direct Deposit. It's fast, safe and avoids any risk of having your check stolen," said James Buck, Assistant CEO in charge of External Operations at OCERS.



COLA, STAR COLA approved by Board of Retirement

Retirees will see an annual cost of living adjustment (COLA) beginning with their May 1, 2004 monthly retirement allowance. The increase, designed to help ease the impact of inflation, was approved by the Board of Retirement at its regular meeting held April 19, 2004.

Members who retired between April 2, 2002 and April 1, 2004 will receive a 2.5 percent COLA. However, any member who retired on or before April 1, 2002 will receive a 3 percent COLA because they have at least a half-percent in their "COLA bank."

This COLA is based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) from the United States Department of Labor as it relates to the Orange County area. The CPI for the Orange County region in 2003 was 2.634 percent; the 1937 Act calls for cost-of-living increases to be rounded to the nearest one-half percent.

In addition, members who retired before April 2, 1981 will receive a Supplemental Targeted Adjustment for Retirees (STAR) COLA beginning with their May 1, 2004 allowance. The STAR COLA restores purchasing power for retirees who have lost more than 20 percent of their purchasing power since retirement.

"The STAR COLA provides a substantial cushion to the oldest retirees, whose benefit has been most diminished by inflation," said James Buck, Assistant CEO of External Operations at OCERS.

'You've Got Mail' from OCERS

At Your Service and other future publications can now be delivered to you via [email](#). Simply fill out the form below and return it to our office at: OCERS, Communications Division, 2223 E. Wellington Ave., Santa Ana, CA 92701. You can receive important information from OCERS and cut down on the amount of mail you receive at home. *Please print clearly.*

Print Name

Date

Email address

*Social Security Number

Daytime phone number

Signature



*Please mail this form in a manner that ensures your Social Security Number is kept confidential.

Orange County Employees Retirement System
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