

ADVOCATE



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Part-Time Long Beach City College Faculty Win Landmark Ruling

Judge rules adjunct professors not exempt from minimum wage laws, must be paid for hours worked

By Julian Peeples

“We were so sure this was the right thing to do but we were terrified at the same time,” says Karen Roberts, art history professor at Long Beach City College (LBCC) and Community College Association member. “It felt like we were sticking our necks out – we’re just a couple at-will employees.”

Nearly three years after filing a lawsuit against LBCC, Roberts and fellow part-time art professor Seija Rohkea won a historic ruling in February that will have an impact on the members of Certificated Hourly Instructors CTA/NEA (CHI) and potentially more than 40,000 adjunct faculty in community colleges statewide.

In 2022, Roberts and Rohkea filed suit over the college’s failure to compensate them and hundreds of other adjunct community college faculty at the minimum wage, as required by law. Their lawsuit outlined many additional duties their teaching assignments required beyond the classroom time for which they were actually paid – colleges only pay adjunct faculty for the time they are teaching in the classroom.

“When I was president of CHI for about eight years, I kept finding creative ways to tell the Board of Trustees they weren’t paying us for anything we were doing outside the classroom and we were working for free,” Roberts says. “I got tired of hearing ridiculous things like ‘you can do your syllabus during class.’”

LBCC and other community colleges require part-time instructors to work many hours performing teaching-related work outside of the classroom, including time spent planning lectures, grading and performing other instructional activities that are necessary to teach a course. Colleges also evaluate the work performance of these instructors based on their teaching-related work outside of the classroom despite not paying them for those hours worked. The court ruling found that these faculty members are not exempt from minimum wage laws, and they should be paid at least the minimum wage for each of those uncompensated hours.

“The judge affirmed that we are being exploited,” says Rohkea, who now works full-time at Fullerton College in a classified role in addition to teaching at LBCC. “It’s so validating that someone in the legal system agrees with our case.”

Community College Association (CCA) President Eric Kaljumägi attended some of the hearings along with CCA Vice President Randa Wahbe. Kaljumägi says this ruling is a step in the right direction for equity for part-time faculty.

“While this lawsuit only modestly dents the dramatic pay inequity in the college system, I am glad to see that Roberts and Rohkea have prevailed,” Kaljumägi says. “The Long Beach decision makes clear that to be exempt from minimum wage laws as a professional, you must earn a professional wage – one that is specified in regulation as at least double what a full-time worker at minimum wage would make. At present, Long Beach part-time faculty do not meet this salary threshold (a little under \$69,000) even if they were legally permitted to teach full-time loads both academic semesters.”

Winning Respect and Fighting Exploitation

With the college ruled to be at fault, attention turns to the next phase of the trial (a trial setting status conference is scheduled in early April) where the remedy will be determined. CTA legal staff said they are requesting compensatory damages for the impacted members, who could see back pay and benefits for the unpaid hours of work for the past three years – potentially, tens of thousands of dollars for previously unpaid work. But with the decision setting a legal precedent that may benefit part-time faculty across the state, Roberts and Rohkea both say this is about more than money.

“I’m hoping that when CHI goes into bargaining, maybe it’s not business as usual and we’re treated with more respect,” Roberts says.

“At times when I was scared, (our CTA staff attorney) kept saying ‘how would it feel if you could help set a legal precedent?’ Those words were so encouraging,” Rohkea adds. “I



From left to right: Roberts and Rohkea

don’t know what we’re going to get financially. Will we get something? Yes, but that’s not why we did this.”

Over the years, California community college districts have increasingly turned to part-time, or adjunct, faculty to teach students and support learning – adjunct faculty teach up to three-quarters of community college classes in some districts. These part-time faculty are required to hold the same minimum qualifications as their full-time counterparts but are deemed temporary and have little job security.

Part-timers are only allowed to work two-thirds the load of a full-time professor, meaning that many string together adjunct jobs at multiple colleges, earning the moniker “freeway flyers” for the amount of uncompensated time they spend commuting between their jobs. To compound matters, community colleges pay adjunct faculty less than full-time faculty, and fail to pay them for the many hours of essential work they do outside of the classroom on behalf of their employers – as in this case and others currently waiting for their day in court.

“One of the greatest inequities in education today is that of part-time college professor pay,” Kaljumägi says. “At Long Beach, part-time faculty are expected to exercise their independent judgment to complete the same preparation, evaluation, paperwork and communication tasks that full-time professors do, while earning a salary that is on a per-class basis at most 63% of what a full-time professor earns on column 1, step 1 on the salary schedule.”

How the Years Go By

I tend to enjoy trying new things, so my life has quite a few “firsts” in it.

For example, I ran my first 10K last month. (I wasn't particularly fast, but still...). What I haven't contemplated nearly as much until recently are my “lasts.” For example, this is my last Advocate article, in my last year as CCA President, which is likely my last leadership position. It is perhaps fitting then, that I devote this last column to look back on the past six years in CCA.

The CCA conferences are doing quite well. Last October, our Fall conference hit a record 130 delegates! Six years prior we hardly ever had 100 delegates at our Northern California events. While this past winter was slightly smaller at 123 delegates, this increase has occurred despite an unfortunate shrinking of our membership. In February 2020, CCA's membership peaked at 12,129 members, and at the start of 2025 it had 11,060. This reduction is due almost entirely to retirements. While practically none of our members drop their membership, it has become more difficult to sign up new members. We have also expanded our council time from two sessions a year to three and have hired a parliamentarian to make the meetings flow more smoothly. We have implemented a lot of the feedback from our post-conference surveys, and we have so many good breakout session ideas that we are scouting out hotels with additional breakout rooms!

The COVID-19 pandemic was quite sobering, with over a million Americans dying and with everyday life dramatically altered for several years. During this time, we canceled the Spring 2020 CCA conference, and then ran five virtual conferences between October 2020 and February 2022. Although we hated to lose the networking and social aspects of our events, a full two years without hotels and travel costs, combined with a booming stock market, have allowed us to take on some additional costs for a limited time. CCA currently covers our delegates' full hotel expenses rather than just half. We provide many meals during our conferences to our delegates' guests for free instead of charging for them. We now allow our delegates to drive in even if a flight would be less expensive. To top it off, we've done this without raising our dues in over 20 years!

CCA also instituted several additional grants. While we've long had a membership development grant, during my time as president CCA has added part-time membership tracking grants to help locals keep track of the turnover with their part-time members, reassigned time grants, for when a local needs a short burst of extra time away from the classroom, and innovative proposal grants for... well, anything innovative. That's hundreds of thousands of dollars put to targeted use so that our union is better organized and more robust.

Our committee structure within CCA is also more robust. When I took over the presidency, CCA had six council committees: Elections and Credentials, Faculty Equity and Diversity, Legislation and Advocacy, Membership Development, Part-Time Faculty Issues, and Policy. We now have eight, having recently added a Campus Safety Committee



and an Organizing Committee, and a ninth one, Advocacy, is being planned. In addition to our standing committees, CCA has considerably increased its use of ad hoc task forces, and we sometimes have more task forces than standing committees! This year, CCA had task forces on Advocacy, AI, DEIA, the June Planning Meeting, One-Tier, Part-Time Faculty Drops (by CTA), and Summer Institute. That's 15 groups of dedicated CCA members doing the work of our union this year!

While this article glosses over my many mistakes, there's nonetheless quite a bit at CCA that's going well. I am most pleased with our improved advocacy work. Back in 2019, advocacy was something that CTA Government Relations staff did, with a modest amount of follow-up by the CCA President and Vice-president. Now, we have an identified group of member lobbyists, multiple annual visits to legislators and a task force that is making plans on how to further improve our influence in Sacramento and beyond!

However, the implementation of anything new now will fall to the next CCA President. Our elections for the new president and vice president will take place at our Spring Conference, since CCA Board members are elected by our conference's delegates. The new leadership will then take over on June 1. As for me, although I will no longer be on the CCA Board, you're likely to still hear about me from time to time. This spring will be my 55th CCA conference, and I'm not tired of them yet.

Eric Kaljumägi
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ADVOCATE

The Community College Association, with CTA and NEA as our partners, advocates for California's public community college faculty, staff, and students; empowers locals; builds strong and effective coalitions; promotes equity, inclusion, anti-racism, social justice, and part-time faculty equality, and strives to preserve universal access to quality public education.

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The combined low pay, lack of respect and unreasonable expectations (like working for free) have made working as part-time faculty unsustainable, according to Rohkea, who says the sacrifices and disrespect made her feel like she was “renting her career.”

“I would like to see the California Education Code changed, so we are not kept to 67% of a full-time professor’s load. I would like to see a livable wage for adjuncts who are doing this as their full-time careers,” Rohkea says. “When I have students who want to go into teaching, it’s hard to stand behind being a college professor when I know only one in 10 of them will find a full-time job teaching. How do you advocate for your student to go into this?”

Rohkea says the disparity between full-time and adjunct professors became even more evident during the COVID-19 distance learning years, calling it exploitation – with massive amounts of unpaid work required of part-time faculty, including meetings, certifications and trainings, in addition to their course-related responsibilities.

“All these trainings and things we have to do, we never get paid for any of it,” says Rohkea. “That needs to change and I’m hoping that’s what comes of this win.”

This victory is just the beginning. Our union continues to organize to change part-time faculty compensation laws

to win parity for part-time community college faculty. Kaljumägi points out that while paying a vastly lower wage to a “perpetual underclass of employees is wrong, it is still legal.” Previous attempts to fix this problem in the Legislature have been unsuccessful but the fight continues. Kaljumägi is hopeful this decision will bring momentum to the movement.

“Part-time faculty across the state will benefit from this ruling and I am glad for it, but our struggle for pay equity is not over,” he says.

‘This is All of Our Victory’

Roberts and Rohkea say the ongoing support from CTA legal staff and fellow members across the state has been integral to their win in court. The professors said the win is a shining example of the Power of Us.

“It’s a collective effort – nobody can be out here by themselves doing this. This is all of our victory!” Roberts says.

“It meant so much to us to know that people were cheering us on. Knowing that there’s a bigger picture was everything,” Rohkea adds. “When we fight, we win. We have to stay united and in solidarity, and keep our eyes on the prize of a livable wage and better quality of life.”

In Their Own Words

Seija Rohkea: “It’s so meaningful to have this case and be able to help future adjuncts. Even the word adjunct is demeaning because it means “temporary.” We’re seen as temporary even though we are 80% of the faculty in some colleges. I would love to see that changed so this work is seen as a career.”

Karen Roberts: “As part-timers, we cite (precedent-setting court case) *Cervisi* all the time to apply for unemployment benefits, so now others might cite *Roberts v. Long Beach CCD*. That’s kind of amazing. I feel really proud.”

Case Chronology

April 4, 2022: CTA filed a class action wage-and-hour lawsuit against Long Beach City College District (LBCCD) in Los Angeles County Superior Court on behalf of more than 650 LBCCD adjunct faculty. The lawsuit seeks the maximum damages of three years back pay and the unpaid retirement benefits owed for uncompensated work hours, as well as penalties and interest.

Feb. 19, 2025: L.A. County Judge Stuart Rice issues ruling granting declaratory relief to plaintiffs. Judge Rice rules on essential questions of part-time faculty being non-exempt (due to the district not paying sufficient salary to qualify as exempt from minimum wage laws) and the district’s obligation to pay minimum wage for all hours worked by part-time faculty, which he found the district was violating.

With the college ruled to be at fault, attention turns to the next phase of the litigation - a trial to determine the extent of the backpay and benefits damages owed to adjunct faculty who work at LBCCD. A trial scheduling conference is scheduled for **April 9, 2025**.



Photo by [Wil Stewart](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Governor’s Proposed 2025 - 26 Budget for California Community Colleges

By **CTA Governmental Relations**

The Governor’s proposed January Budget provides a total of \$14.8 billion in Prop 98 funding and property taxes for the California Community Colleges (CCC) in 2025-26, an increase of \$851.1 million, or 6.1%, compared to 2024-25. Total funds for the CCC in 2025-26 are \$21.2 billion. Specific spending proposals for community colleges include:

Apportionments – The budget includes an increase of \$230.4 million in ongoing Prop 98 funding for a 2.43% COLA for Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF) apportionments and \$30.4 million ongoing Prop 98 funding for 0.5% enrollment growth. The 2024 Budget Act included a payment deferral for community colleges totaling \$246.7 million. The Governor’s Budget proposes to fully repay these deferrals in 2025-26.

Master Plan for Career Education – In 2023, the Governor called for a new Master Plan for Career Education, with the purpose to align state education and workforce development programs with the needs of the future economy, better coordinate and streamline those programs regionally and across state agencies, and ensure that the state’s students and adult learners have affordable access to needed educational and career development opportunities over the course of their working lives. The Governor’s Budget proposes the following investments to implement the Master Plan:

- \$100 million one-time Prop 98 funding, \$7 million of which is ongoing, for CCCs to expand Credit for Prior Learning and begin building the infrastructure for the state’s first “Career Passport.” The Career Passport

system will allow students to create formal documentation of their marketable skills developed through work, classes, apprenticeships, internships or other experiences both inside and outside the classroom.

- \$5 million ongoing General Fund for the Government Operations Agency to establish a state planning and coordinating body for TK-12 education, higher education, and state economic and labor agencies, to improve forecasting of needed skills and coordination of resources and initiatives across state government.
- \$4 million one-time General Fund to support regional coordination for career education and training.

Statewide Technology Transformation Project

The Governor's Budget proposes to provide \$168 million in one-time Prop 98 funding for the completion of the Statewide Technology Transformation project. This project aims to standardize and streamline data collection across the community college system.

Systemwide Common Data Platform

The Governor's Budget also includes \$162.5 million in Prop 98 funding, \$29 million of which is ongoing, for scaling of a common cloud data platform across the community college system.

Community College Facilities

The Governor's Budget includes \$51.5 million in one-time Prop 2 bond funds allocated for critical infrastructure, facility modernization and enrollment growth projects for 28 community college facilities.

Expansion of Rising Scholars Network

The \$30 million ongoing Prop 98 funding to expand the Rising Scholars Network, which provides college educational opportunities to students who have been impacted by the criminal justice system, with the goal of serving more students through the program.

CCC Categorical Program COLA

The Governor's Budget includes an increase of \$16 million ongoing Prop 98 to provide a 2.43% COLA for select categorical programs and the Adult Education Program.

Celebrating Women's History Month: Advocacy for Reproductive Rights, Pregnancy Leave and Parity in Higher Education

By **Jacqueline Penhos**, CCA Southern Women's Rights/Issues At-Large Director



Jacqueline Penhos,

CCA Southern Women's Rights/Issues At-Large Director

As we celebrate Women's History Month, I reflect on the progress we've made as women, particularly women in academia, and the crucial work that remains. As a part-time professor of color, and Women's Director within my union, I've had the privilege and pleasure of advocating for policies that are designed to ensure that women in academia have equal opportunities, fair treatment and access to the resources and benefits they deserve. One of the most important areas of my advocacy has focused on reproductive rights, pregnancy leave and health care access—issues that have long been sidelined in academia, despite the growing recognition of their importance.

Through my union work, I have fought for policies that center around the needs of women faculty and staff, particularly the need for paid pregnancy leave and support for women who are balancing their professional responsibilities with the physical and emotional demands of pregnancy and caregiving. To this day, women educators have often been denied paid pregnancy leave as a part of their employment contracts. It's shocking that such an essential benefit—particularly for

women in academic positions—is still a point of contention in higher education institutions.

While we've seen some progress, I often find myself thinking, "We've come a long way," but the reality is, we still have a long way to go until we truly reach **parity** for women in academia, especially women of color. This work is ongoing, and as we move forward, I want to reflect on how union activism, the intersection of women's rights, and the persistence of women in academia have made significant strides—and also how there's still a tremendous amount of work to be done.

Reproductive Rights and Pregnancy Leave: The Ongoing Fight

One of the primary areas of my work as both a Women's Director and part-time Professor of Psychology has been fighting for reproductive rights and pregnancy leave for women in academia. It's hard to believe that in 2025, some academic institutions still don't offer paid pregnancy leave as a benefit for their faculty, even as other sectors have implemented such benefits decades ago. Reproductive rights, including access to health care during pregnancy, and parental leave, are not only critical for women's health, but they are essential to ensuring that women can continue their academic careers without unnecessary barriers and setbacks.

Despite the increasing recognition of the challenges women face when balancing pregnancy and a demanding career in academia, many women are still forced to navigate the academic landscape with very few institutional supports. Historically, many universities have offered limited or no paid pregnancy leave, forcing faculty members to either take unpaid leave, return to work too soon, or struggle to maintain their research and teaching commitments while dealing with the physical demands of pregnancy and childbirth.

Union Advocacy for Paid Pregnancy Leave:

Through my role in the union, I've had the honor of advocating for paid pregnancy leave for women faculty. As a part-time professor, I understand how important it is to have the time and space to care for yourself and your growing family without worrying about losing pay or status in your career. This is why my activism has been focused on pushing for paid pregnancy leave as a fundamental right for women professors, like we are doing at the [statewide level](#). Having witnessed the hardships faced by many of my colleagues, especially those who are part-time or contingent workers, the lack of paid leave only exacerbates the challenges of balancing academia with the demands of motherhood.

For the first time in ten years, our college has introduced a **Mother's Room**, a designated space for changing, feeding, resting and pumping. This is a significant step forward, but it's just one of many actions needed to ensure that female faculty have the same opportunities and support as their male counterparts when it comes to balancing work and family life. While this is a notable victory, we still need comprehensive policies that guarantee paid pregnancy leave, expanded family leave and protections against discrimination related to pregnancy and caregiving.

The Intersection of Women's Rights, Labor Activism and Academia

The intersection of **women's rights, labor activism** and **academia** is where change is most often born. Women in academia—especially women of color—have faced a unique set of challenges, which include not only the usual academic hurdles but also discrimination and biases that are deeply rooted in society and academia itself. As a part-time professor of color, I've personally experienced how labor activism can serve as a powerful vehicle for change in

Union activism has been a critical tool for pushing for policies that support women's rights in academia, particularly in terms of reproductive health, parental leave and workplace equity. The work that women in academia have done, particularly in pushing for family leave and health care access, has ensured that the struggles of women, particularly women of color, are not overlooked in academic policy discussions.

Fighting for Family Leave and Equal Opportunity: Family leave policies are another area where we have made strides, but there is still much work to be done. When women—especially those of color—enter academia, they often face added challenges, including racial microaggressions and institutional biases that undermine their opportunities for advancement. When it comes to parental leave, these challenges are compounded. Union activism, including the leadership of women faculty, has been instrumental in pushing for **equitable parental leave** policies that ensure all faculty members—regardless of gender or race—can take leave to care for their families without fearing repercussions in their careers.

It's critical that academic institutions recognize the intersectionality of women's needs in the workplace. Family leave should not be a privilege for a few—it should be a right for all. This is why union activism remains a key component of the ongoing fight for equal access to paid family

leave, job protection and accommodations for caregivers. As women, especially women of color, take on the emotional, physical and mental load of caregiving, their roles within academia should support these contributions rather than penalize them.

Mental Health and Well-Being: Mental health is an issue that has often been overlooked in academia, particularly among women. The pressures of teaching, research and service can take a toll on mental well-being. As a professor of color, I am also acutely aware of how racial microaggressions and discrimination add additional stressors for faculty members of color. This is why I've been an advocate for not just reproductive health services, but also mental health resources that can help women faculty manage the emotional and psychological demands of academia. We must ensure that women have the tools and support to not only survive but thrive in their academic careers. Union advocacy has been crucial in pushing for mental health services to be included in health care packages and ensuring that these services are available and accessible to all faculty members. These initiatives make a significant difference in the well-being of faculty members and contribute to a more inclusive, supportive academic environment

Looking Forward: The Road to Parity

While we have made significant strides, the fight for reproductive rights, family leave and health care access in academia is far from over. As I reflect on my work as a part-time professor of color and Women's Director, I'm reminded of the challenges that still exist, especially for women of color and those in precarious positions in academia. The work ahead requires continued activism, solidarity and commitment to pushing for **parity** in the academic workplace.

Parity means more than just equal opportunities—it means ensuring that women, particularly women of color, have the same access to the resources, benefits and protections as their male counterparts. It means challenging the systemic inequities that exist within academia and ensuring that policies are inclusive of all women, regardless of their position or race.

As we celebrate Women's History Month, let us remember that the work of those who came before us laid the foundation for the victories we've achieved. But let's also recognize that the fight is far from finished. Our journey toward parity in academia continues, and as women in academia and union activists, we must remain committed to pushing for the changes that will make the academic world a more equitable and just space for all.

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PROVIDENT CREDIT UNION

CCA Winter Conference Brings Hope and Resilience

By **Gabriella Landeros**

Personal Finances 101 for Faculty: Understanding the Landscape and Ingredients for an Effective Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Committee on the College Campus were among the many engaging sessions at the CCA Winter Conference that brought shared understanding of the issues community colleges face and shined light on how we can become a stronger union.

Ingredients for an Effective DEIA Committee on the College Campus was an interactive workshop where facilitators led engaged participants to identify the optimal ingredients for establishing an effective DEIA committee on the college campus and tie this to the plight of part-time faculty in their quest for equity.

“

We need DEIA not just as a concept, but as a practice. It is essential for part-time faculty like myself. Without DEIA, we continue to be pushed aside. DEIA is also for marginalized communities where we feel like we don't belong. We deserve to be treated with respect. We need DEIA to be an intentional part of our union,

”

said Noushin Seddighzadeh, CCA Part-Time Faculty Issues Committee Member and Mathematics Professor at Saddleback College.



Some of the suggestions provided by participants in the DEIA session included owning mistakes, taking action to model for students and the community, including everyone at the table and having measurable targets.

Personal Finances 101 for Faculty: Understanding the Landscape offered an overview of how STRS DB and DBS, 403b's, 457's, IRA's, Annuities and 529's work together to ensure your family's well-being and a comfortable retirement for you.

“

Faculty are seldom encouraged and sometimes even actively discouraged from talking about money, yet financial stability is a necessary condition for successful teaching and thus for student learning. I'm grateful that I've had the opportunity at my local and at CCA to help my colleagues understand the personal financial landscape as well as the importance of taking positive steps to save for retirement now rather than later,

”

said Jonathan Ausubel, CCA Treasurer and English Professor at Chaffey College.

When asked what the number one recommendation to members for successful savings is, Ausubel said

“

STRS won't be enough on its own; if you haven't already started supplemental savings, now is the time to start.

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It's time to register for the CCA Spring Conference which will take place from April 25-27, 2025, at the Irvine Marriott. Membership will be the highlight for this conference, and we'll highlight our "We Honor Ours" (W.H.O.) Award winners Saturday night with a plated dinner. This is a special program which honors our own local and state union leaders. We will also hold our last Council of the academic year. If you have questions about the conference, please email the conference staff at ccaconference@cta.org.

Visit cta.org/event/cca-spring-2025-4-25-2 or scan the QR code above to register for the conference today!

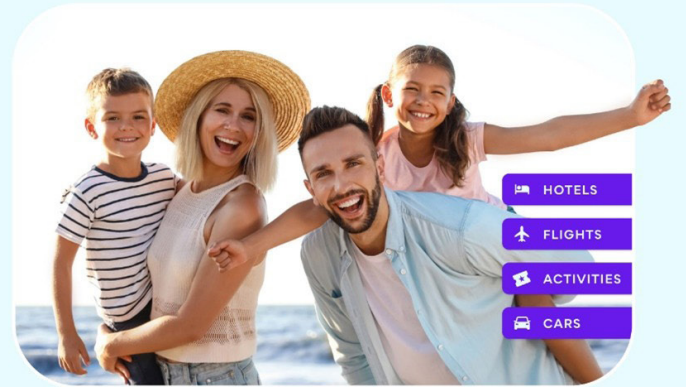


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