

BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME  
YOUR OWN LOCAL COALITION

By: CRCEA Retirement Security Committee  
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The CRCEA Retirement Security Committee (RSC) met at the CRCEA Fall Conference to discuss furtherance of the general goals previously set – **“To protect current retirees’ hard-earned pensions and benefits”**. By extension, this also includes protection of the retirement system that current employees are counting on to be there when they retire.

Major work by the RSC to date, has determined that Coalition Building and Early Threat Identification are the major keys to success. On the surface, coalition building may seem daunting, given the very limited resources the twenty CRCEA association member counties have at their disposal. However, San Diego RESDC has pioneered a successful and easily replicated model that was premised on the “Build it and they will come” philosophy. Their model is proving both workable and highly valuable.

**Specifically, Valuable Benefits of the Coalition Include:**

- Strength through increased numbers
- Constant and consistent approaches to core common issues
- Proliferation of knowledge about issues in your area
- Better communication and working relationships
- An Improved Rapid Response capability to attacks
- A broader base to help Identify Threats, and Assess and Respond Early
- A broader advocacy base and audience
- Greater Access to Relevant Research Materials
- Administrative resources to operate and help maintain and run the coalition
- Engagement of far more resources to address common issues

**Highly Valuable RESOURCES** that naturally become available through coalitions include:

- Full Array of Legislative Resources
- Staffing – Operational as well as Administrative
- Advocacy Mechanisms
- Message Development Mechanisms
- Message Dissemination Mechanisms
- Research Materials and Sources, and
- Ad Hoc Funding

So how has San Diego pulled off this seemingly impossible feat? Their approach was to simply invite participation in informal meetings of groups with the same or similar concerns about the attack on pensions we and they have been suffering. This provided the advantage of allowing all participant groups to address just common issue without the cumbersome work of formal organizational development.

The result has been a focus on just common goals, with none of the resource expenditures normally associated with melding the various uncommon and different issues multiple coalition groups face. To date the following common concerns and positions have been identified for defending and advocacy by the San Diego Coalition:

1. All workers should have a retirement security
2. Public retiree pensions are reasonable
3. Public employees pay for their pension benefits
4. Retiree pensions contribute to the economy

*Building Your Own County Coalition based on the San Diego model **is feasible**, even with your limited resources.* We believe this because most of the eleven groups, that attend the San Diego Coalition informal meetings, have a statewide presence and generally have in place regional, county, or city representatives. The RSC sees this as a major leg up for developing similar local coalitions in our 37 Act counties since the path has been paved and the model for participation already set. The goal would be a similarly constituted coalition to that in San Diego that could include some of the following type groups:

1. Retired Employees of San Diego County (RESDC)
2. City of San Diego Retired Employees Association (CSDREA)
3. San Diego County Employees Retirement Association (SDCERA)
4. Retired Fire & Police Association of San Diego
5. California Retired County Employees Association
6. Retired Public Employees Association
7. California State Retirees Association
8. California State Employees Association (CESA)
9. National Active & Retired Federal Employees Association
10. California Alliance for Retired Americans
11. Californians for Retirement Security

While the larger CRCEA Counties have a lot of territory to cover and may, therefore, want to replicate the San Diego effort strictly within their own county, there is nothing to prevent two or more – especially smaller counties, from pooling their resources for a single multi-county effort.

As we are currently monitoring developing threats, the RSC sees a strong need to expand this Coalition model as quickly as possible and looks forward to working with CRCEA Associations to rapidly get similar local coalitions in place. Please contact George Shoemaker at [george@shoemakerhome.com](mailto:george@shoemakerhome.com) if you need further information, or when you are ready to proceed.