Elections are vitally important to Public Employees

Cecily Hodges, President

Virtually every one of us APEA members are public employees. We work for the state of Alaska, for the university system or for a local government entity. In some cases, we work for more than one public employer.

It, therefore, follows that we have (should have) an even greater – more direct and more fundamental – interest in the outcome of elections than private sector employees. Elections select our employers, and through the subsequent policy-making and political appointment processes, elections often select our managers, supervisors and even our individual bosses.

Our active engagement and participation in elections, both statewide and local elections, therefore, is, really, imperative; it is “enlightened self-interest” – our votes will help to select the policymakers, the managers and sometimes even the immediate supervisors in our own workplaces.

Fall is local election season in Alaska. Almost every community is electing its local leadership in October – mayors, assembly or council members, school board members, all the positions that establish policy for how our local government will operate. In Juneau, for instance, the incumbent CBJ Mayor has announced that he will seek a second term; in Fairbanks-North Star Borough, however, the incumbent mayor must leave office due to term limits, and the candidates offering to succeed him also offer the citizens of FNSB sharply differing visions of social and community values – residents of the Borough have real choice in this fall’s mayoral election!

Throughout Alaska, throughout our country, local elections will decide local leadership, which will decide the direction, the philosophy and the tone of local government, and how business, life and liberty will fare in each community. All citizens should be deeply interested in the outcome of local elections, and public employees obviously have an even greater investment in local elections, since their careers as well as their living conditions will be affected by the outcome of each and every election.

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You must be registered to vote no later than Sunday, September 6th, in order to vote in your local election. Please register if you are not already registered, and please vote in your local election!

Also note that Labor Day 2015 is Monday, September 7th, the day after the registration deadline. This is a holiday to recognize and celebrate “labor”, the work that we all do to make our society operate and to allow our society and economy to provide us with the goods and services that enrich our lives. It is our holiday, and I encourage all APEA members to seize and enjoy the holiday, to embrace the holiday – in Fairbanks and Juneau, you can celebrate by attending the Labor Day parade and picnic (picnic only in Juneau), where you can socialize with co-workers and other workers, enjoy good company and learn more about pending elections and the work being done by your labor movement, and the activists in your union and the many other unions in your community – you may be amazed at how many unions and how many activists work to make your community the excellent place it is, the place you chose to live and raise your family. Enjoy!!
Welcome, New Staff!

As most members know, we have had several staff members resign and/or retire recently, and have been undergoing a fairly dramatic change in staff composition. The changes are certainly not finalized yet, but they are well in process.

In mid-July, Dezarae “Dez” Deraimer left state employment, and her spot on the CEA Executive Board, and joined the APEA/AFT staff as a Field Associate in the Juneau Office. Dez will bring the internal organizing and communication-building skills she learned during her time on the CEA Board and several AFT “field trips” to bear for APEA’s benefit by spearheading our campaigns in Southeast. While having immediate impact as an internal organizer and builder of improved communications processes, Dez will also be learning representational skills and developing advocacy and negotiations qualifications. I suspect we will see her moving smartly up APEA’s representational career ladder very soon!

On Monday, 17 August, two new Field Representatives will also be joining our staff. In Anchorage, Kim “KC” Snodgrass will come on board as the primary Field Rep for SU and CEA in Southcentral. KC has extensive contract enforcement experience in the California public sector, and in the private sector in both California and New Mexico, as well. KC is very familiar with the variety of public sector working situations – state, local government, municipal, schools, special district – and I expect he will acclimate very quickly and very effectively to our Alaska public employment situations.

Also, on Monday, 17 August, Joel Hill will join the Juneau Office as a Field Representative. Joel is also from central California and has substantial experience representing both public employees and private sector employees. He has handled grievances, arbitrations and negotiated contracts, and we expect he will be an immediate asset to the Juneau Office, and that he and Dez will make for a dynamic and energetic team to continue strong and effective representation of southeast APEA members and address our commitment to enhance our internal organizing and communications for all APEA affiliate local unions.

We continue to seek two additional Field Rep positions in Anchorage and a strong internal organizer with political acumen to fill our State Affiliate Political Organizer (SAPO) position, also in Anchorage. If you are a longtime activist member, and interested in a career “re-direction”, please consider a position with APEA – in my experience, many of the best union reps were previously excellent union activists!

Matanuska Experimental Farm
maintenance mechanic and Local 6070 Steward Jim Ericksen started with the University in 1990, is a founding member of Local 6070 and one of the first stewards for Local 6070 representing both the members at the Palmer farm and members at the Mat-Su College. He has seen many changes at the farm as it has grown and more recently waned to a much smaller operation. There is very little that Jim can’t fix, from trucks, tractors, bailers and the day to day maintenance of the buildings. Jim’s job is a little different from most of our maintenance mechanics in that he also assists in the care and calving of the cows that reside at the farm.

Photo: Jim Ericksen grills steaks on a unique modified charcoal grill June 30 at the 100 year celebration of the IAF Matanuska Experimental farm. (Photo courtesy of Brian O’Connor, Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman)
News From the Interior

An update from Northern Regional Manager, Michael Koskie:

Fairbanks Office Accessibility During Road Construction

The Alaska Department of Transportation is working to rehabilitate College Road and reconstruct the College/Antoinette/Margaret Avenue intersection. Work began July 17th and will affect the area in front of the field office until early September.

Access to the APEA office remains open however getting to the office through the detour may be a bit of a challenge. There is no entrance to the field office on College Road available. Members must drive down Bridget Street (two streets west of the building) and head south to O’Conner turning left on O’Conner for one block and take another left on Maryleigh to proceed to the ally way in back of the office. Take the ally and proceed to the back of the office (seriously folks!) Driving on the back alley is the only way to reach the office. Both Maryleigh and Antoinette Avenue which are the closest streets to turn down are closed off to College Road. Signs are posted for the Detour as well as flag persons when work is being done.

Thank you for your patience. Please call the office if you have trouble reaching us.

Adjunct Professors/UA-Adjuncts Local 6054 APEA/AFT-AAUP

Election Ballots for local and state-wide officers have been mailed out and must be returned by the end of the day on Friday August 14. The field office has extra ballots and we are available if anyone needs assistance in returning the ballots.

Hats off to Northern Region members on the ballot which includes Steve Becker, Secretary-Treasurer (state-wide); Katie Boylan, Regional Chair (Vice President); and Sally Rafson, Regional Secretary-Treasurer.

You Are Not Alone…

Employee Representatives: Your Workplace Advocate

When a member is called into an investigatory meeting with their supervisor/department head- this can be a terrifying, confusing, frightening time…”What have I done, am I going to be terminated”? It’s comforting to know you are not alone in this process. Your workplace employee representative(s) undergoes training to be of assistance to you in times like this. These trainings are presented through APEA and AFT programs, and Northern Region Staff. Northern Region can boast that we have trained Employee Representatives for each local we represent. So if you find yourself on the receiving end of an investigatory meeting, know You Are Not Alone.

The union member-representatives have all completed extensive training through both AFT and APEA courses regarding the laws, rules and traditions of effective employee representation. That training has been supplemented with years of activism and participation in the business and representational efforts of their local union. They are dedicated to providing quality assistance and support to their co-workers, and to presenting both their Local Union and APEA as the honest and effective organizations they are.

Northern Region Employee Representatives

SU Reps: Walt Evans (DJJ), James Simon (F&G), Shelly Showalter (DNR), Tim Viavant (F&G).

FNSBEA: Cecily Hodges (Assessing), Chris Clark (Computer Svcs), Bobette McKirgan (Public Works), Paul Holland (Parks & Rec), Shawn Fletcher (Facilities), Lisa Stoffel (Animal Control).

City of Bethel: Josh Howell (Public Works).

City of Nome: Terry Williams, Nathan Barron.

NJUS: Jay Wieler (Public Works)

UAF Adjuncts: Katie Boylan

MAY GREEN
Northern Field Representative
APEA Members in Action at the AFT Northwest Leadership Forum

Photo: Kate Quick, NR UAFT member, and Jeff Goldsmith, FNSBEA Vice President, attending Communication Skills (left), and members of several APEA locals, including CEA, SU and FNSB, as well as members from AFT locals in Washington and Oregon state attend Introduction to Negotiations (below).

Photo (clockwise from right): Jef Morgan, SE SU Chapter Chair, John White, Statewide Supervisory President, and Katie Boylan, UNAC VP (nominee) attend Powering Up Your Local Union.

Photo (right): Kate Quick, UAFT, and James "Jim" Simon, NR Supervisory Unit breaking bread after a day of intense training.

Photo (right): Paul Holland, FNSBEA Negotiations Team member attending AFT Northwest Leadership Forum "From Complaint to Grievance to Mobilization-Effective Assessment and Action" with members of AFT Locals from Washington and Oregon.
When we go to a healthcare provider, almost all of the time the provider’s staff offer to “bill your insurance” for us. We have succumbed to the ease of this offer at one time or another – maybe always! However, therein lies the danger. Each of us is responsible for the payment of our bills. The fact that we have paid healthcare coverage is great, but ultimately if your employer’s healthcare administrator or your dependent’s healthcare administrator fails to pay, or fails to pay in a timely manner, we are responsible for the consequences.

A State employee’s spouse just recently came to us for assistance. The spouse had a service performed at a local facility. After the procedure, the facility said no problem with “insurance”, that they would bill the spouse’s healthcare plan and the secondary coverage belonging to the State employee. Except the facility kept sending notices to the spouse saying that the primary health plan had not paid. The spouse did finally get involved and after more than a year, the facility got a partial payment from the spouse’s primary insurance, the only one to be billed at all. Then the facility sent the balance of the bill to the secondary carrier for payment (the State employee’s plan administrator - AETNA). AETNA denied payment:

STATE OF ALASKA, AlaskaCare Employee Health Plan

Section 7.2: CLAIM FILING DEADLINE

To receive benefits, you must submit a claim within 90 days after treatment began, or within 30 days after treatment ends, whichever is later. Network providers will submit claims on your behalf. If you are unable to meet the deadline for filing the claim, your claim will be accepted if you file as soon as possible, but not later than 12 months after the date you incurred the expenses.

The member allowed the facility to handle all the billing, and now is on the hook for all of the bill not paid by his primary coverage. The provider facility only billed the primary plan and never the secondary until after the initial payment was received. As a result, no billing was sent to the secondary insurance until after the one year deadline for filing. After exhausting his appeals with the State, the only option left was to appeal the matter to the state superior court. A very expensive option with a very uncertain outcome.

Every healthcare plan in place, with every one of our employers, has some “Claims Filing Deadline”. You must keep track of your medical expenses and monitor the payment of those bills by any coverage you may have. Bills must be submitted to our “insurance” within the time limits in each plan. You ultimately are responsible for any unpaid bills.

Save on education expenses with Union Plus. The rising cost of higher education can be a real barrier to union families who want the best for their kids. Union Plus offers annual scholarship awards, discounts on college test prep courses and college counseling, plus grants to help erase college loan debt. Don’t let money complicate your family’s college goals. Turn to Union Plus for help.

Save the union way at UnionPlus.org/AFT
A Note About Future Newsletters

Starting in September, we are going to be distributing the APEA Newsletter electronically through your local presidents. If you would like to receive a copy by a non-work e-mail, contact your local president or APEA at newsletter@apea-aft.org. If you do not have access to a computer or wish to have the newsletter mailed to you, please contact the Juneau office.

In Memory of
Kathleen Lynne Peterson
April 8, 1969-July 16, 2015

Kathy began working for the Division of Personnel & Labor Relations as an Individual Allocations Supervisor in the Classification Section in September, 2008. Her upbeat, bubbly, and outgoing personality was infectious. She brought a sense of fun, happiness, and caring to work. She had a way of bringing out the best in others and making you feel special. She quickly became a beloved coworker and a dear friend. She became our Kathy, who will be missed more than words can express, yet her kind, thoughtful, loving spirit will remain in our hearts always. We are sorry to have lost her.