Starting a new job can be a scary and intimidating time for people. When you start, you are inundated with piles of paperwork from Human Resources. You then go to another building across town or office down the hall. Everything is new. You have the skills for the job, but everything else is new.

(Continued on page 4)
The Looooong Legislative Session(s)

Cindy Spanyers, Legislative Liaison

Contentious. There is no other word to describe the first part of the 29th Legislative Session. For more than a year, the price of oil – our main source of revenue – continued a precipitous drop, sending our budget into a near crisis. In addition to honoring the contracts, our challenge was to protect as many of our members’ jobs as possible throughout state and local governments as well as school districts and the University of Alaska. With the price of oil less than half of the projected forecast, that proved difficult. Some legislators fought for severe cuts to match the reduced revenue stream while others, including the Governor, maintained smaller cuts would keep us from entering a recession. With your help, we were able to hold the line on a fully funded Base Student Allocation and diminish the original cuts to the University of Alaska.

What will 2016 bring? Alaska still faces a severe deficit while our reserves are drawn down. How will the legislature face this battle? Will they further reduce services or will they reduce the tax credits to the oil industry? Will they advocate for privatization or the diminishment of collective bargaining rights? Will they seriously consider alternative revenue streams whether from an income tax or the permanent fund earnings?

We have a great deal of work ahead to ensure Alaska can provide needed services with an eye towards recruitment and retention of qualified staff who will still have a voice at work.

**Taxing Health Plans?**

A “Cadillac tax” is coming in 2018 and it could be bad for our healthcare costs

_Dennis Geary, APEA/AFT Assistant Business Manager_

We have all been hearing that the dreaded “Cadillac tax” is coming in 2018 and it will be bad for our healthcare costs. What is it and will it be bad?

The Cadillac tax is a provision of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) intended to help pay for its provisions. We know very little about how it will work, only the basics, with the details to be spelled out in regulations. Those regulations have been partially drafted but they are not anticipated to be issued any time soon. Consultants everywhere are guessing what it means and how it will be implemented.

The ACA says that a healthcare plan is subject to the Cadillac tax if the total annual cost of providing medical and prescription drug coverage exceeds either $10,200 for employee only coverage or $27,500 for family coverage. If the cost of medical and prescription drug coverage under a particular plan does exceed one of these limits, the healthcare provider must pay a tax to the federal government on 40% of the amount which exceeds either of the limits. The employees are not directly assessed the tax, but the cost of providing healthcare will go up by the amount of the taxes paid as the money must come from somewhere.

In Alaska, the cost of healthcare is 29% higher than the national average. Many of the public employers in Alaska have written our Alaska Congressional Delegation and asked that they seek legislative adjustment in the tax thresholds for Alaska (and other high cost states) or eliminate the Cadillac tax altogether.

Will it be bad? Maybe. It depends what the regulations require, whether the Congress modifies the ACA in any way, and how much the cost of providing medical and prescription drug coverage is for each employer.
Final Goodbye
Geo Barack, APEA/AFT Southeast
Field Representative

It has been an honor to work for Alaska Public Employees Association (APEA) as a Field Representative in both Southeast Alaska and the Interior. After almost five years of working for APEA I have come to appreciate the work of our members who support this union through actions both large and small. The ranks of APEA include committed local officers who freely offer their time to improve the lives of their fellow employees. Employees Representatives support their coworkers and provide a voice in their worksite. Many members serve on committees to help organize philanthropic events, such as food drives, or clean-up days. Even the one-time emails and phone calls from our members to their Legislators make a difference.

Serving in this capacity has been a gratifying and humbling experience. During my tenure, I have had the opportunity to work with a talented, dedicated team. Together, we have made progress on: engaging our members about important contractual enforcement issues to negotiate stronger contracts; providing training to our local leaders to be stronger advocates, laying the groundwork for a larger capacity of union activism; and working to elect Labor friendly candidates in both statewide and local elections.

As I depart APEA, to attend Graduate School this fall at Cornell, I want to thank our membership and my fellow staff members for their commitment to serving our union and for their leadership in bettering the economic status of our members and their families. I am grateful to have worked with them, and represented them.

"Every end is a new beginning.
-Proverb"

IT HAS BEEN AN HONOR TO SERVE YOU
Fran Rabago, APEA/AFT South Central Field Representative

July 10 was my last day as an APEA union representative. For the last five years my primary role was to represent members of the State of Alaska’s Supervisory Unit and Confidential Employees Association. However, on occasion, I had the pleasure of assisting members from some of the other 22 locals within APEA statewide. My job would have been nearly impossible had it not been for the many APEA employee representatives and leaders who volunteer their time and efforts to assist you, the hard-working members of this Association. All are dedicated to ensuring strong union advocacy on your behalf. Please be sure to thank them for going above and beyond the rights of membership. Remember: you are the union and that with the rights of union membership comes a responsibility to maintain its strength. So, I encourage you to consider becoming more involved yourselves. Be an employee representative, count ballots, volunteer to assist with organizing efforts, participate in union-sponsored rallies, or simply attend union meetings. The more involved we are the stronger we become. The stronger we are, the better our chances will be to feel secure in our jobs and to enjoy fair and reasonable terms, conditions and privileges of employment. So with these parting words I say to each and every one of you, Fare Thee Well Brothers and Sisters of APEA/AFT and Stay Union Strong.

APEA/AFT Members
Celebrate the Fourth!

APEA members joined the Juneau Central Labor Council to march in the Fourth of July parade including CEA Board Member Joe Reeves (above). The Labor Council’s entry won second prize in the historical vehicle category.
MAY SHOWERS BRING FLOWERS AND CLEAN ROADS IN FAIRBANKS
The Northern Region membership of Local 6070, UAFT and AHMC rolled up their sleeves, grabbed garbage bags, donned brightly colored safety vests and took to the highways to free the roads of winter debris as part of the Adopt a Highway program. Local 6070 President Charlie Silva is pictured cleaning his stretch. This yearly activity is an opportunity for members to get involved with making an impact in the community they live, work and love.

PEOPLE OVER POLITICS The Northern Region membership joined the fight to ask our Legislators to honor the contracts and to fully fund education. Organizing near the State Office, union members, activists and concerned members of the public rallied to stress the importance of holding our elected officials accountable, insisting they keep their word. NR Supervisory Unit President Walter Evans and UAFT member Kate Quick waved signs which read “Alaskans for Alaska” to agitate and inform the public.

TRAINING The Fairbanks office has been quite busy ensuring our members receive training and information to be fully functional active members. We recruited three new employee representatives, two from Supervisory Unit Local 4900 and one from City of Nome Local 6141! These new reps attended a week-long, intense training in Girdwood where they became fired up and ready to help you.
An update from Northern Regional Manager, Michael Koskie:

The Fairbanks North Star Borough Employees Association (FNSBEA) has recently passed out a form under the guise of EEO regulations asking employees if they want to “self-identify” whether they have a disability. The forms say “your answers will be kept private and not used against you in any way.” Members should know that you do not have to answer this form and are well within your rights to check the box that says “I don’t wish to answer.” The employee’s discretion should be used in listing a disability that has not been diagnosed by a medical professional and doesn’t affect your ability to perform your job.

Members who had to fill out Workers Compensation forms have complained that the forms they are given can be very intrusive and concern medical issues as well as personal questions that are not connected to the prospective work related injury. This matter was discussed in contract negotiations and members are reminded they do not have to complete any questions that they believe are intrusive and non-work injury related. The annual meeting for FNSBEA will be held sometime in August.

Look for your notification soon.

The City of Bethel Employees Association expects to resume contract negotiations shortly after the City Manager and the City Council finalizes the budget. Elections for local union officers will be scheduled soon.

UA-Adjuncts Local 6054 are about to hold their officer elections. Happily, we have a full slate of candidates. Statewide president Fran Polumsky will finally be receiving member support as she continues her crusade to improve adjunct working conditions. A big thank you, Fran, for securing many successes for adjunct professors and for your years of dedicated service.

How May We Help?
Continued from page 1.....

else is new. How do you answer the phone? How do you transfer a phone call, use the employer’s internal computer programs, or where do you store your tools? All of these questions can be overwhelming in a new job.

As union members, we should be the friend the new employee meets first. Not their supervisor or colleague, but their fellow union member. Many of our Locals have programs to reach out to new members, but we need to do better and get our new members feeling like they belong to our union family.

Welcome each new employee into the union family. Offer to help, let them know you are there to answer their questions or can direct them to the right person. Invite them to lunch with fellow union members and get to know the “new guy.”

Breaking News: Supreme Court Agrees to Hear Friedrichs v California Teachers’ Association

Your voice in the workplace may be squelched if the Supreme Court rules in favor of the plaintiff in Friedrichs v California Teachers’ Association. At issue: whether or not public employee unions can collect fees from non-union members. Thirty-eight years ago, the high court ruled unions could collect fees from non-union members to pay for collective bargaining costs including fighting for your contract. Some conservative justices questioned that precedent while anti-union groups searched for the ideal case to overturn the practice. They may have found it with Rebecca Friedrichs, a public school teacher in California, who believes her free speech rights and free associations are violated. However, the union is required to provide representation to all bargaining unit members. Agency fee or “fair share” insures that a person may decline membership, but that the union is provided with the funds necessary to meet those responsibilities. If the court decides in favor of Friedrichs, this dangerous case could undermine our ability to adequately represent you in these turbulent times.
**WELCOMING OUR NEW BUSINESS MANAGER**

*Cecily Hodges, President*

I am excited to announce the appointment of Pete Ford as our new Business Manager. As APEA’s Southeast Regional Manager for fourteen years, Pete provided leadership in all areas of union advocacy from negotiations to arbitrations. In addition, he served as the Juneau Central Labor Council President for ten years before stepping down last month to take this position full-time. In his new role, Pete was instrumental in helping steer APEA through the arduous special sessions with six of our negotiated contracts on the line and thousands of layoff notices in the mail.

As your President, I look forward to continuing our important work with Pete in the coming years on your behalf. I deeply appreciate the work you do across this vast state providing critical local and state government services; educating and training our young adults at the university; and instructing our youngsters and keeping them safe in school districts. You, the membership, are diverse and highly motivated. Thank you for making Alaska a great place to live.