Cecily Hodges, President

As this edition of our newsletter goes into distribution, I and several of your Local Union leaders will be attending the 100th Anniversary Convention of our national affiliate union, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), AFL-CIO.

Like our own APEA Biennial Caucus (to be held this October), AFT’s convention occurs every other year. While the convention is certainly enjoyable – one meets new friends and activists for worker rights, renews acquaintanceships with “old” friends and activists and learns about activities, campaigns and challenges around the country – the convention is also extremely work-intensive.

The convention delegates consider, debate, refine and take or decline action on a huge variety of resolutions, policy statements and expressions of our common values; we set and prioritize goals for the next 2 years of our union’s business; and we elect national officers.

I am always daunted at the beginning of each convention regarding how much work the delegates are asked to do; and I am always pleased and proud at the end of each convention about how successfully the delegates have addressed and completed their work.

And then, we will take those decisions, those lessons, those experiences and bring them to APEA’s own 2016 Caucus in October, and APEA’s delegates will do the same work, albeit with a localized focus on Alaska and APEA’s 23 Local Unions.

We are busy, very busy, but we are accomplishing significant and important work – both nationwide and locally.

Please consider joining us, and assisting our efforts – more hands lighten the load, more participation and involvement improves the decisions and their results – and we all have a strong, personal interest in the work, because the work addresses the improvement and strengthening of each of our work assignments, work environments and personal careers.
By Cindy Spanyers, APEA/AFT Legislative Liaison

The legislature is wrapping up the fifth special session with no consensus forming around a fiscal plan; except, perhaps, what Governor Walker calls the “No Action Plan.” The state is facing severe shortfalls this year and for years to come. With the rapid burn down of our savings, it is crucial for our state to diversify its sources of revenue.

The situation is grave. David Teal, the Legislative Finance Director, provides the legislature and the Finance Committees numbers and projections but he seldom interprets the data. In a paper issued this month, he stepped out to make the following statement:

“Alaska is in the midst of the gravest fiscal crisis in state history: FY 16 and FY 17 revenue is expected to cover less than 30% of annual expenditure, leaving fiscal gaps that are too large to fill with sustainable draws from reserves. Many citizens believe – thanks in part to information provided by some legislators and various advocacy groups – that government expenditures have ballooned even as revenue has fallen.”

Teal’s paper and graphs demonstrate that the budget has been cut by 44% since FY 13 and our expenditures are at the same level as FY07. At the same time, our current revenue only pays for less than a third of our expenditures. In conclusion, Teal states that without combination of taxes, additional budget cuts, or use of permanent fund earnings, the budget reserves will not last through FY19.

When that happens, Governor Walker painted a gloomy picture during a press conference held on July 14. The cuts will be devastating with the impacts ending the Alaska Performance Scholarships and Power Cost Assistance (including revenue assistance). Most government agency operating budgets would be a fraction of current levels with school funding reduced to a third of the current amount. All general funding to the University of Alaska would cease.

Even with the dire predictions, the House just adjourned from the fifth special session without a fiscal plan but with a number of floor speeches critical of state spending. Several decried the Governor’s veto of half the anticipated $2,000 permanent fund check to $1,000, claiming that state government was still too bloated and needed further reductions. One decried the continuation of merit steps earned by some state employees.

Not all legislators agreed with the vetoes made by Governor Walker to education, the university and state agencies; there was dismay the legislature as a whole was accepting all the decreases – especially to school debt and the base student allocation – as the apparent fiscal plan.

The Senate is scheduled to meet again on Monday, July 18, where it is expected they will end the special session and head home until next January.

When they come home and begin holding events and knocking on your door, ask them: how exactly do they propose to fix the budget? Ask them to be specific.
Across the Juneau area, cooler temperatures and threatening weather reports did not discourage hundreds of residents from coming out to watch and participate in the Independence Day activities.

In fact, the weather turned out to be exactly what was needed for a short tour through town, perfect temperatures and not one drop of rain!

The Juneau Central Labor Council represents AFL-CIO Unions, including APEA’s Juneau area Locals #6133 Confidential Employees Association, #4900 Supervisory Unit, #6134 Juneau Mental Health Professionals, #6096 Juneau Education Support Staff and # 6054 United Academic Adjuncts.

APEA unions walked in solidarity with ASEA, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, firefighters and marine highway members. AEL&P, whose electricians are represented by IBEW, donated their shiny brand new (and huge) Boom truck for our banners and decorations while carrying our members in style.

Rodney Hesson, IBEW Assistant Business Manager, led the CLC in his ’54 Ford Crestline, rightfully displaying his award for “Best Classic Car,” an award he has won a second year in a row.

This joint Union activity is fast becoming a CLC and APEA tradition. If you didn’t make it down this year, be looking for us next Fourth!
FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

The FNSBEA Local 6125 members recently conducted Officer Elections. Congratulations to the following members who were elected to FNSBEA Officer positions:

President, Cecily Hodges  
Vice President, Jeff Goldsmith  
Secretary, Stefanie Fisher  
Treasurer, Marsha Gross

APEA FIELD OFFICE WELCOMES NEW FIELD REPRESENTATIVE, JASON ROACH

The APEA Fairbanks Field Office is welcoming Jason Roach as a new Field Representative.

Jason started on June 16th. He and his wife moved here from Wenatchee WA, where Jason worked in a manufacturing plant represented by United Steel Workers.

Jason, an Air Force veteran, was President of his local, and also served in nearly every other leadership and officer position with the local.

When his plant closed, Jason worked in the eastern WA AFL-CIO Displaced Workers program, assisting union members displaced from work due to plant closures.
APEA staff along with folks from the AFL-CIO joined Unite HERE, Local 878, and many other Anchorage area locals, as they rallied together to picket at the Anchorage Hilton.

Local 878, who has been without a contract for 8 years, has suffered unsafe working conditions including dangerous mold, which was discovered in 2014. In 2010, the Anchorage Hilton’s chief engineer wrote, “Our hotel is loaded with asbestos.”

Lead can also be found in aging buildings, and in October 2015, the Anchorage Hilton found that out of 174 samples of paint and glazing, 16 tested positive for lead.

ACE was one of the many Porta-a-Potty sponsors for the 2016 Alaska Run for Women. As you can imagine with over 4,800 participants taking part in the 24th annual run, walk and stroll charity event for breast cancer, the potties become an important asset. The event highlights survivors, honors those that have lost their battles and brings awareness to breast cancer.

Susan Williams organized and chaired the ACE committee that decorated the Porta-a-Potty along with graphic designer and ACE member Pam Butcher. Lending support and a helping hand were Corinne McVee, Steve Brown and his family.

Along with our volunteer Porta-a-Potty crew, ACE had many members participating in the event as well.
SU Twists & Turns, Staff Changes

SU continues its efforts to secure a reasonable contract in an unreasonable financial environment. As you may be aware, SU entered into mediation with the state of Alaska on 22 & 23 June. With the assistance of a federal mediator, we were able to forge a conceptual tentative agreement – one which required some additional clarification and wordsmithing. The concept was also contingent upon concurrence by other unions – as you know, the state places huge value on “pattern bargaining”, or having different bargaining units share identical, or near-identical, contract terms; SU, through mediation, had succeeded in getting some desirable modification of some terms which are shared by other unions, so the state insisted that the other unions agree to those modified terms, as well. Unhappily, one of the other unions rejected the proposed modification, resulting in the possible collapse of our conceptual, contingent agreement.

SU and the state will meet at the end of this month to determine whether we can re-work the concepts, or whether we will proceed to interest arbitration of all remaining contract issues. If arbitration is necessary, it will probably be scheduled for some time in November.

In the meantime, SU and the state have agreed that the 2013-2016 contract is extended and is in full force and effect until either a negotiated agreement is ratified or arbitration defines a new agreement. So there will be no disruption of services or work opportunity and we will continue to find our way to a successor agreement.

Meanwhile (back at the ranch?), APEA continues to re-build staff and make those changes necessary to better engage members and encourage the involvement of “new generation” members. Jason Roach has joined the Fairbanks Office as the new Field Representative. Jason hails from Washington State, where he has extensive experience as a union activist, Local Union officer and union staffer.

In Anchorage, Anne Knight has joined the APEA staff. Anne is a longtime HR professional with the state of Alaska, is very familiar with the state’s policies, procedures and contracts, and has demonstrated herself to be an immediate and effective addition to staff, especially to our ability to assist state members.

We have searched high and low for a replacement for Assistant Business Manager Dennis Geary, who will retire on 1 September, and have finally accepted that we cannot replace him with anyone who replicates his knowledge and experience with both APEA and the state . . . but we think we have come pretty close. SU member and activist Brian Penner joins our staff as the new Anchorage Regional Manager. Brian has been an SU member for several years and previously worked for the state of Oregon, where he was an activist and steward with his SEIU Local. Brian served on the 2013-2016 SU Negotiating Team, and has remained involved and engaged in SU and APEA issues.

Brian is accepting a significant learning challenge, but I am confidant...especially relying on both staff and member support and assistance...that he will meet the challenge and help APEA move into a dynamic and positive future.
NEW RULES REGARDING CAUCUS

We presume most members are aware that 2016 is an APEA Biennial Caucus year, when we gather, meet, discuss and debate our goals, priorities, plans and aspirations for the organization and elect state officers. As a result of the 2014 Caucus’ APEA Constitutional changes, there are some important rule and procedure changes taking effect this year:

First, the nomination process for APEA President and Secretary-Treasurer are dramatically changed – nominations actually opened on 22 June and WILL CLOSE on 20 September. No more at-caucus nominations! On 30 September 2016, nominations will be announced. Voting will take place at caucus, just as it always has, but the nomination process will be completed and closed before caucus begins.

Similarly, the process of amending APEA’s Constitution is changed – 22 June was the opening date for Locals to submit proposed constitutional amendments and 20 September is the deadline for submission of any proposed constitutional amendment. The Constitution Committee will meet before Caucus, review and make its recommendations regarding the proposed amendments and a booklet of proposed amendments, with committee recommendations, will be part of delegates’ caucus packet at the beginning of caucus.

These are very significant changes in APEA’s traditional amendment and election procedures, please note them and be sure to take all necessary preparatory steps to assure that any amendments you wish to propose or candidate you wish to nominate is done in a timely manner.

Technology: A Core Function for Schools and Society
By Joel Hill, SE Field Representative

While you may think schools are vacated for summer, far from it. Not only are the maintenance folks busy, but the technology department is in the process of exchanging out old equipment. Some of the laptops slated for recycling are ten years old. They will be replaced new equipment.

Greg Collen (IT Department), Juneau Education Support Staff (JESS) Employee Representative, surveying obsolete equipment.

Stephanie Gavin and Chris Cairns (JESS, IT Department) working to ensure that when school starts in just over a month technology will be up and functioning properly.

Chris Cairns and Stephanie Gavin running wiring for projector. New monitors and projection devices are being mounted while classrooms are empty.
Representative Paul Seaton, Chair, House Health and Social Services Committee, is a strong supporter of Vitamin D as a way to improve health and reduce medical costs. Research shows that healthy Vitamin D levels help reduce diabetes, breast cancer, and improve recovery after surgery as well as many other illnesses.

To help support the health of state employees and lower medical costs, Representative Seaton has negotiated a state employee discount for Vitamin D from the Piping Rock Company. Below, please find a discount coupon Piping Rock is providing with this newsletter.

Representative Seaton’s office has communicated appreciation for APEA/AFT’s support of preventative health. If APEA/AFT members have any questions about the benefits of Vitamin D, please visit his webpage at: http://www.housemajority.org/members/seaton/ and scroll to the bottom left side column where information regarding Vitamin D research may be accessed.