Cecily Hodges, President

Our union is not a military organization, not a privately-held corporation or entity and not an oligarchy. It is a representative democratic organization, guided and directed by democratically elected representatives who have been charged to oversee the general management of the organization. It works best when there is maximum participation in the elective and leadership processes and procedures of the organization.

Earlier this month we opened nominations for one-half of our Board of Director seats (and alternates). Half of our Board is elected in odd years, the other half in even years. Elsewhere in this newsletter, we have printed the official notifications and opening-of-nominations letters, and the specific seats up for election are identified.

So far, halfway through the nomination period, we have received nominations for only 4 of the 18 (including Alternates) seats up for election.

Service on the Board is not terribly time-consuming, is actually pretty interesting and satisfying and is absolutely essential to the integrity and democratic operations of both the Board and the union, itself.

Involved, engaged, participating members are the key – the essential component – to APEA’s successful operation, service and representation of its members.

Let’s please get involved – make this a real election and help provide APEA with a Board of engaged, involved and effective directors.
Opening of Nominations for APEA Board of Director Seats - Election 2017

On behalf of APEA Executive Vice President Michael Lund, and in accordance with the APEA/AFT Constitution SECTION V – BOARD OF DIRECTORS, Article 7. Selection, please be advised that nominations are now declared open for the following APEA/AFT Board of Director Seats:

A. Northern Region Seats:
Northern Region Seat: Primary and Alternate seats – represents:
Fairbanks North Star Borough Employees Association, APEA/AFT Local # 6125;
Nome Joint Utilities Employees Association, APEA/AFT Local # 6138;
City of Nome Employees Association, APEA/AFT Local # 6141

B. Southcentral Region Seats:
Southcentral Region Seat (Seat 2): Primary and Alternate seats – represents:
TOTEM, APEA/AFT Local # 6265

Southcentral Region Seat (Seat 3): Primary and Alternate seats – represents:
TOTEM, APEA/AFT Local # 6265

Southcentral Region Seat (Seat 5): Primary and Alternate seats – represents:
Matanuska-Susitna Borough Employees Association, APEA/AFT Local # 6136;
Kenai Borough Employees Association, APEA/AFT Local # 6140;
City of Bethel Employees Association, APEA/AFT Local # 6055;
Homer Organization of Professional Employees, APEA/AFT Local # 6572

Southcentral Region Seat (Seat 6): Primary and Alternate seats – represents:
Anchorage Council of Education, APEA/AFT Local # 4425;
Anchorage Early Intervention Occupations Union, APEA/AFT Local # 6355

C. Southeast Region Seats:
No Seats up for nomination

D. Statewide Seats:
Southeast Regional Supervisory Unit Seat: Primary and Alternate seats – represents:
All of SU in Southeast, APEA/AFT Local # 4900
(“Statewide” seat, but nominations are limited to the Southeast Region/Chapter of the SU.)

Statewide Seat (Seat 5): Primary and Alternate seats – represents:
United Academics, APEA/AFT-AAUP Local # 4996

Statewide Seat (Seat 6): Primary and Alternate seats – represents:
United Academics, APEA/AFT-AAUP Local # 4996

Statewide Seat (Seat 8): Primary and Alternate seats – represents:
Alaska Higher Education Crafts & Trades Employees, APEA/AFT Local # 6070;
Alaska Housing Maintenance & Custodians, APEA/AFT Local # 6082

Nominations should be emailed to Business Manager Pete Ford at: pford@apea-aft.org
A Kodiak Moment

Alaska Department of Fish and Game APEA members share “Just another day at the office.”

You can’t make this stuff up.

Nate Svoboda, ADF&G Wildlife Biologist) during bear collaring project, photo taken on Sitkalidak Island, Kodiak Archipelago

Nate makes a new buddy while the rest of the team draws blood from mom. Hopefully, it’ll be a clean bill of health for mama and her cub.

Larry Van Daele and Nate Svoboda paying attention to the details.
Under the Influence?
By Joel Hill, Southeast Field Representative

Alcohol and drug use, sadly an appropriate topic of the moment. Is it the snow, the State budget, or simply overwhelmed? I have addressed this previously and I circle back as we have had an increase of folks reporting to work under the influence. One’s substance abuse may lead to representational issues.

**Important fact:** Did you know you are subject to alcohol and drug testing based on reasonable suspicion?

Whether the substance abuse occurs at home or at work, those who abuse alcohol and drugs (including illegal drugs, prescription drugs, and over-the-counter drugs) can create significant issues for both employers and other employees. Additionally, having a hangover or coming down from drugs at work can be just as problematic as being intoxicated. Headaches, blurred vision, irritability, problems concentrating, and extreme tiredness can all create problems for you and your co-workers.

If you are going through a rough patch, utilize your resources. Many individuals and families face a host of difficulties closely associated with problems, and these problems quite often spill over into the workplace. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is the most effective way to address issues. EAPs deal with all kinds of problems and provide short-term counseling, assessment, and referral with alcohol and drug abuse problems, also emotional and mental health problems, marital and family problems, financial problems, dependent care concerns, and other personal problems that can affect one’s work. EAP service is confidential.

The point is … if you think you need help or know a coworker who needs help, let them know about the EAP before you find yourself in the position of having to call for representation.

---

News from Ketchikan Gateway Borough  By Gabe Hargrove, Southeast Field Representative

The Ketchikan Gateway Borough, Local 6137 negotiating team met again with management’s negotiating team both February 23 & 24th and March 8th & 9th. Both meetings were concise and we kept on track addressing the last two issues of keeping good, quality, affordable health care as well as compensation. The bargaining team members have been diligent about calling the question on maintaining the healthcare benefit package currently in place.

We are on track to wrap up negotiations and get a Tentative Agreement (TA) out to the members to vote on soon.

The team has done a great job and we’re all feeling cautiously optimistic as we move forward.

*Pictured from the left: SE Field Rep Gabe Hargrove, Jim Pomplun, President Bryan Turner, Steve Franklin, and Fred Bannon.*
Labor Management Committee on Training

by Anne Knight, South Central Field Representative

Both the APEA/AFT Confidential Employee Association (CEA) and Supervisory Unit (SU) Labor Management Committees (LMC) are scheduled to meet with the State this month to discuss training topics for CEA and SU membership.

The topics include the renewal and possible update of the online Rapid Learning Institute classes, Managing Multiple Priorities and Projects, Organizing for the Overwhelmed, and the Lean Process Management and Management Skills.

The CEA LMC includes Joe Reeves, Paul Affatato and Lura Noss. Joel Hill is the APEA/AFT staff working with this committee.

The SU LMC includes Cindy Gilder, Lorinda Lhotka, and Ann McPherson. Annie Knight is the APEA/AFT staff working with this committee.

Please contact Anne or Joel if you have any additional training topics.

Health Plan Literacy

By Brian Penner, South Central Regional Manager

For many APEA members, their health plans are a nice benefit that serves to reduce anxiety about potential health emergencies. However, for APEA members whose family's health or their own requires dipping into this benefit, the complexities can create the financial anxiety the benefit was meant to avoid.

With the high cost of healthcare in Alaska, most plans are looking for creative ways to make their plans viable and affordable in the current fiscal climate. Some of these new plans can certainly save some individuals money and for others could prove financially disastrous if chosen inappropriately.

Most health plans work hard to communicate their benefits and have help lines that can provide further assistance, but there are still too many stories of members who were negatively affected because they did not understand the details of their plan or chose a plan that did not fit their needs.

It is not likely that health insurance is going to simplify or become cheaper anytime soon. This makes it even more important to understand your health benefits and reach out to the available assistance with any questions.
AFT Blitz in Albany, New York
By Gene Christian, Southcentral Field Associate

The Albany Blitz Brigade!
(Be the First to Find the Four APEA Participants and Win an APEA Vest, Submit Answers to Gene Christian, Anchorage Field Office.)

APEA/AFT joined its brothers and sisters of the Public Employees Federation (PEF) in Albany, NY for a weeklong blitz this month.

The blitz, led by AFT Senior Associate Director Jennifer Porcari, will always be known as the "Blizzard Blitz" because on March 14th, Albany received an unprecedented 17 inches of snow in one day.

Over the course of the week and despite the snow, members from Alaska, Illinois, Kansas, and Connecticut participated in a whirlwind of activity aimed at engaging some 19,000 PEF members in the area.

Six teams conducted site visits, knocked on doors, handed out leaflets and made phone calls to have conversations with members about Right to Work and to help educate them about the next attack on the labor movement.
Adjunct Receives Award for Volunteer Service to Alaska

Adjunct Member Bruce Bowler recently received an award from the Alaska State Troopers to celebrate his 40 years of volunteer service.

Bruce, who is a proud member of the Adjunct Bargaining Team for collective bargaining negotiations, is the founder and a member of Southeast Alaska Dogs Organized for Ground Search (SEADOGS.) As such, Bruce has responded to over 800 search and rescue operations, half of which he also served as the Incident Commander.

As a primary search and rescue instructor, Bruce’s expertise includes Wilderness, Avalanche, Disaster (Collapsed structure), Water and Cadaver search. The class also includes Critical Incident Stress Management Instruction and debriefing.

Bruce has a background in Federal Law Enforcement and was the Range Master and Training Officer for the Alaska Peace Officers Association. He has Taught Hunter Safety/Education courses in 4 states and besides teaching as an Adjunct, has served as the Rifle coach for the University of Alaska SE.

APEA congratulates Bruce as well as his wife Judy on a job well done!
Come Meet Your Board!
By Joel Hill, Southeast Field Representative

Juneau Educational Support Staff (JESS)

Come meet with your Board. It is an opportunity to meet your Board, interact and see union activity in progress.

The meeting is also your chance to be heard and discuss concerns.

The Board likes to keep most meetings to an hour and they have an agenda at each monthly meeting to keep everyone on task.

Photo from the February 22, 2017 Board meeting
L-R Angie Childers, Communications; Jennifer Johnson, Treasurer; Cricket Curtain, President; Lisa Petersen, Secretary; Chris Cairns, Parliamentarian

Election of half the Board is currently taking place--look for your ballot in the mail, plan to attend the Saturday, April 15, Semi-Annual board meeting where ballots will be counted.

News From the Interior
By Jason Roach, Northern Field Representative

ATTENTION – ALL NORTHERN REGION LOCALS
FAIRBANKS Adopt-A-Highway and 2017 Clean-Up Day IS COMING!

The date is set for Saturday, April 29th! APEA’s adopted roadway is the Mitchell Expressway, from University Avenue to Peger Road.

We will need volunteers! This is a good time to come do something for your community and meet friends while doing it. Contact the local Fairbanks office at 907-456-5412 to sign up!

Is this the year that the Fairbanks North Star Borough Employees Association is “dethroned” as the local who brings the most volunteers?
The Employee Political Information Committee (EPIC) directors are looking to update EPIC bylaws. The bylaws were last updated and approved in October 2010, more than six years ago.

EPIC has established a Bylaws Committee to solicit comments, compare comments against current bylaws, draft an updated version, and present proposed changes for consideration at the next Biennial Caucus.

Change starts with our members. Successful and meaningful changes depend on communicating what doesn’t work and giving feedback on what can and should be different.

The Bylaws Committee is looking for your comments on the EPIC Bylaws. A copy of the bylaws can be obtained on request to epicbylaws@apea-aft.org or your field office.

Please submit comments by Wednesday, May 17, 2017. Email questions or comments to epicbylaws@apea-aft.org or mail to EPIC Bylaws Committee, c/o APEA/AFT, 3310 Arctic Boulevard Suite 200, Anchorage, AK 99503.

EPIC objectives are to promote the welfare of active employees and retirees in the State of Alaska, provide members with information on the positive and negative aspects of legislation affecting them, and encourage participation in political activities.

One way EPIC meets these objectives is endorsing and contributing to candidates in local and State elections. More information on EPIC endorsements is available at www.apeaepic.org.

The EPIC Bylaws Committee members are Sharon Baker (TOTEM), Jeff Goldsmith (Retired Public Employees Association), Amey Tamagni (TOTEM), Cricket Curtain (Juneau Education Support Staff), Marta Mueller (Supervisory Unit), Gene Christian (RPEA), and Pete Ford (APEA/AFT Staff).

Feel free to contact any of us on our efforts!
What About the Survey?

Some of you have, no doubt, observed that we haven’t yet reported on our survey regarding the recommendation as to how our state might best address its revenue shortfalls and problems. In all candor, while the survey responses are interesting, the actual numerical response was disappointing.

Slightly less than 1,000 members completed the survey, but, given our membership of 8,000, that’s rather fewer respondents than had been expected. Our state has been struggling with this revenue situation for three years, and, so far, state and school employees have been virtually the only Alaskans significantly impacted by the situation. (Yes, all Alaskans suffered reduction of the PFD this year, including all public employees; the “tinkle-down” effect will begin to exhibit in local agencies this year, but so far it’s been state and school workers who have been carrying the load of Alaska’s revenue problems.)

In any event, of the 1,000 responses, about 650 were from SU members and 39 were from CEA members. Since we are able to do “broadcast” email to SU and CEA, their response levels seem to speak to the effectiveness of the “broadcast” emails and our organizational need to enhance and strengthen our ability to communicate with the membership, and, we hope, to motivate their communication with us!

Outside of the state members, we have very limited “broadcast” capability to other members. We rely on the Local President to relay information throughout each Local Union. Judging from the survey responses, however, that system isn’t working very well; we clearly need to re-think how to more fully communicate – suggestions welcome!!

Meanwhile, a word or two about the survey, itself. Geographically, it wasn’t too bad – 350 responses from Anchorage, 3 each from Bethel & Cordova, 101 from Fairbanks, 5 from Homer, 221 from Juneau, 39 from Kenai, 15 from Ketchikan, 12 from Kodiak, 113 from MatSu and 3 from Valdez. Interestingly, about 47% preferred a sales tax, whereas about 45% preferred an income tax; there was also skepticism about any need to implement new taxes and substantial support for changing the oil tax plan (omg again!!) and increasing the fuel tax surcharges.

The BOD will be reviewing and discussing the survey at its annual Budget Meeting and Board Training on the second weekend in April. Afterwards, we will get the survey, itself, up on the APEA website so members may review and ponder the survey for themselves.

Our thanks to all who completed the survey. Surveys are only one way of member participation, and member participation is the single essential factor to a competent, effective, vital and impactful union. Please be assured that we are open to any and all suggestions as to how we might improve our communications with members and how we might stimulate enhanced member engagement and participation.