After an extended session, two special sessions and prolonged machination, the state of Alaska finally crafted their two required budgets – the Operating Budget, which funds the business activities of the state, and the Capital Budget, which funds the construction projects of the state.

The budgets are the two essential, basic requirements of each legislature. They have the budgets, but the legislature once again failed to craft and implement a financial plan. It’s fine to not have a plan during the “good times”, when money is rolling in and the legislature must work hard just to spend all that money on something, but our current times are decidedly not good, and our best bet to navigate the challenging times and maintain some semblance of financial, administrative and executive order is to design and follow an intelligent, realistic financial plan to guide the state's business and construction activities.

With another cobbled together, make-shift, short-term plan, it is again incumbent on APEA, its locals and its members to begin anew efforts to mold and shape the conversation and influence whatever decisions might ultimately be made to craft a solid, effective financial plan for the state of Alaska, and allow us to help formulate a state financial policy and ensure the stability of our state, its economy and our ability to sustain Alaskan communities.

The APEA Board of Directors will revisit these matters again during its October meeting, training and planning. In the meantime, suggestions, recommendations and comments from members will be sincerely appreciated.
10-Minute Meeting

By Marta Mueller, Natural Resource Specialist IV (SU)

Let's take a break from the hour-long lunch-and-pizza work site meeting with a side of teleconference. Try a 10-Minute Meeting!

The 10-Minute Meeting has an agenda that hits on just a few specific hot topics, including follow-up on member questions.

A short meeting is best enjoyed with members that are willing to ask questions, make suggestions, or share success stories in a way that keeps information flowing.

Ask your employee rep to offer 10-Minute Meetings among your diet of annual or quarterly meetings facilitated by APEA/AFT staff. Be ready with a pen and patience. Your employee rep will get back to you with answers to tricky questions that aren't answered at the meeting.

I tried it and liked it! I got my first taste of a 10-Minute Meeting in the April 2017 employee rep training served up by staff members Annie Knight, Joel Hill, and Gabe Hargrove. In the first 10-Minute Meeting I cooked up, I was satisfied to see co-workers connect with each other for the first time, stand up as new members, and ask questions.

Free yourself from that heavy feeling at the end of a long meeting when you want to get all the news, but you need to get back to work. You might miss the shared experience of talking over music when another member puts the teleconference on hold. I bet you won't!

Your recipe for a 10-Minute Meeting is available from staff at http://www.apea-aft.org/staff/.

ACE Local 4425 Negotiations

By Gene Christian, Southcentral Field Representative

This fall, the ACE bargaining unit will be entering negotiations with the Anchorage School District. As we all know, this is a difficult time for any bargaining unit to be sitting down at the negotiations table.

With the challenges that lay ahead, your ACE negotiations team is getting prepared. This month, the team spent three days honing their skills with some of AFT's best negotiators. Their goal is to get the best contract that they can for their membership.

In the coming months, you can expect to see surveys and questionnaires on topics of negotiation and we hope that you will take the time to complete them. Your comments, concerns, and suggestions are extremely important to this process. You may also e-mail us or speak to your Employee Representatives or APEA staff directly.

Let's work together to get a great contract for ACE!

SU/CEA Labor Management Committee

By Anne Knight, Southcentral Field Representative

A joint Labor Management Committee (LMC), for APEA/AFT Confidential Employees Association (CEA) and Supervisory Unit (SU), has been convened to study, analyze, and make recommendations regarding the State's process, instrument and procedures regarding Performance Evaluations.

The committee members representing APEA/AFT are Angelica Johanson, Rick Suydam, Shelly Showalter, Tina Cochran, and Tres Causey. The committee is scheduled to meet with the State's committee in early August.

News from Juneau, Juneau Mental Health Professionals (JMHP)

By Gabe Hargrove, Southeast Field Representative

The JMHP/APEA began contract negotiations with the Juneau Alliance for Mental Health (JAMHI) on May 30th, 2017 and has since met 3 additional times. JAMHI is a non-profit organization providing comprehensive services for persons experiencing mental illness and those with co-occurring problems such as substance use disorders, Traumatic Brain Injury, developmental disabilities, Alzheimer’s disease and other dementia. The current contract has been rolled over year after year since 2014. We are now fighting for a 2 year contract and other union benefits such as contractual language that would permit New Employee Orientations, Seniority and other language around pay and a higher percentage toward merit increases. The membership voted on Friday, July 28th to move out of their (then current) healthcare plan and to incorporate management’s proposed Health Savings Account (HSA), which went into effect August 1st.

The bargaining team consists of one new member: Freya McCaie. Also on the team is JMHP President Lila Seear, Chris Pearson, and APEA Field Representative, Gabe Hargrove. The next round of negotiations is scheduled for early August.
On June 11, 2017, APEA/AFT members gathered in Juneau, Anchorage, and Fairbanks to participate in rallies sponsored by the Alaska AFL-CIO.

Scores of members showed up in all three locations with their families, friends, and pets. They wore their union logo wear, chanted slogans, carried and waved signs. They made sure their voices were heard!

Many members of the local communities also turned out to show their support for the 19,000 State employees who were issued layoff notices on June 1, 2017, and urged their legislators to pass a sustainable budget.

Thank you to all who participated!
Doug Tansy, President of the Fairbanks Central Labor Council, addresses the participants.

Not even the Fairbanks rain kept folks from participating!

Billy Meers, a LiUNA representative, is among the attendees.

Andi Nutty, representing ANA, carries a sign.
News from the Northwest Leadership Forum Training in Vancouver, WA
By Joel Hill, Southeast Field Representative

One of our very own from the Confidential Employees Association (CEA) stepped up during group presentation.

Angelica Johanson presented her group's feedback on improving communications.

Angelica stated, the “Labor in the Time of Trump” seminar was really interesting and his name really didn't even come up much.

We discussed the need to look past personalities and get to the heart of important issues to move an issue forward.

This included group discussions on strategies to inform, engage, and motivate members.

Meet Shelly Showalter
By Anne Knight, Southcentral Field Representative

Shelly Showalter, Administrative Officer II for the Department of Natural Resources.

Meet Shelly Showalter, an Employee Representative for the Supervisory Unit. Shelly is an Administrative Officer II for the Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys within the Department of Natural Resources.

Shelly began her career with the State of Alaska in 2001 and first joined the Supervisory Unit in 2002 for four years, and again in 2009. In 2015, she became an Employee Representative after experiencing the challenges of working through the layoff procedures as a manager and supervisor during the budget crisis. Shelly had already been an internal advocate that staff gravitated towards naturally, but had never really committed herself to working with her union, as things seemed fine at the time. When the budget crisis of 2015 happened, that’s when the “rubber met the road” for her and she decided to make her role as an advocate official.

An Alaskan, Shelly shared that she feels it is her duty to ensure the people of Alaska that the funds and state resources are being maximized in the best ways possible. She is invested in the success of her department, the union and the members she serves as an Employee Representative. Her commitment to her role and her position is a benefit to all, as she supports the investment in future mines, oil and gas production, State revenue, jobs, and a sound economy.
**City of Bethel, Local 6055 Negotiations**

By **Jason Roach**, Northern Field Representative

It’s that time again!

Contract negotiations have begun with the City of Bethel. On May 24th and 25th, the team met with representatives from the city to kick things off. Our team consists of President Gary Watson, Vice-President Dave Stovner, John Sargent, Mike Mendenhall, Thomas Haviland, Northern Regional Manager Michael Koskie and Field Rep. Jason Roach.

We met again on June 7th and 8th. After just two meetings, we have tentatively agreed on several articles and things are moving along quickly and efficiently.

The City of Bethel has some unique geographical challenges that we have addressed in our proposals. Everything has to be shipped in by boat or flown in by plane making things more difficult to find and expensive to buy. Our member surveys identified what is important to them and APEA is striving hard to improve and keep all of their current benefits and pay. We look forward to more meetings ahead as we hammer out this labor agreement.
APEA/AFT presents Public Service Proud, an ongoing series wherein we spotlight a member(s) each month to illuminate the good work they do for the people of the State of Alaska. This month we are pleased to introduce Matthew Forester (SU).

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"We’re ensuring the safety of commercial products grown or made in Alaska—things Alaskans eat or drink every day."

Matthew Forester
Bio-Analysis Section Manager
Environmental Health Lab
Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

At our lab in Anchorage, we test dairy products for bacteria, manufactured food products for salmonella and other pathogens, raw meat at slaughterhouses for E. coli, drinking water for contamination, and shellfish and shellfish farm waters for various toxins.

Our programs protect Alaska consumers, and provide a valuable service to the dairies, shellfish farmers and other producers so important to Alaska's economy.

We take a leadership role in the scientific organizations that establish testing protocols. We work with producers to meet new challenges. Safety and Service—that’s important for all Alaskans.

Support those who work for OUR Alaska.

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**THE TASK AHEAD**

Well, we finally have both an Operating and a Capital Budget, such as they are; we have no real financial plan, except maybe to continue to divert Permanent Fund earnings away from citizens and over to state operating expenses. (That may, or may not, be a good thing; it would simply be preferable if it were done by plan and design rather than by ad hoc patchwork money-grabbing to get a budget balanced.)

Meanwhile, our local government and university Locals are confronting the same "no money" position that has characterized the state's bargaining tactics for the past several years. Our members are getting stonewalled at the bargaining table, and seeing very little collegiality or willingness by management to work together with us and jointly address and manage problems and challenges.

This will all come to a very sharp confrontation in November, when SU opens negotiations for a new contract.

For 2 contract cycles now, SU has tried to accommodate and work with the state's financial situation, while hoping to receive consideration for a variety of non-economic issues that might make for a more congenial and more comfortable workplace. No such consideration, however – SU was given ultimatums and demands, the state insisted on "their solutions" and their responses to problems and challenges. And the state insisted that the state would require all state workers, and their unions, to accept the state's mandates and solutions.

As we know, however, things didn't happen as the state insisted they would. Mandatory furloughs were a bad idea, not ever likely to really help the state's financial problems, but the state insisted 'everyone', all state personnel, must accept furloughs. Just as the state insisted on zero cost-of-living raises during the life of the current contracts. And a year later, the state agrees to a very substantial first year increase and no furloughs with another group of state workers and their union.

Very good. Now we know. SU will enter negotiations in four months and the scenario should be very clear – SU must demand that the state treat SU in the same responsive and fairly considerate manner that the other union has been treated. November's negotiations should be focused, very simple and very direct – SU gets the same deal, the "best" deal, the other union got; no further discussion required.

The question, then, will be – will SU establish and maintain the solidarity required to make that argument prevail? If it will, SU must start now, right now, to build that solidarity and determination. Staff, Employee Reps, SU Members!!! The moment and opportunity is immediately in front – will we seize it?!?