The Governor has announced that he will convene another Special Session of the State Legislature on 23 October 2017. So far, the agenda for the session is, primarily, a revised “flat tax” on wage and self-employment earnings, which, as initially proposed, would probably generate about $300 million per year in new state revenue.

That amount will not solve the state’s revenue problems, but it would substantially improve the revenue situation and it would be a major part of a fiscal plan which would likely help to rebuild confidence in the state’s financial health and situation. It could help “steady” Alaska’s current fiscal instability, and help begin the process of restoring stability and order to the state’s economy.

No one likes taxes. But we all know some taxes are necessary, because there are services that only government can provide, that most of us want. Or, at least, we each want some of the services, though not always the same services.

There are also different kinds of taxes, and many of us prefer one type of tax over another. This “flat tax” proposal, for instance, applies to all monies earned by work performed in the state of Alaska, which strikes many as fair because Alaska has numerous non-resident workers, who work and earn in Alaska but who, currently, do not contribute to Alaska’s economy or governmental services – this tax proposal would address that “deficiency”.

However, there are other tax techniques, and some people may find one or more of the others more preferable than the “flat tax”.

What we need most to realize is that, while there are options, there is not a great amount of time. We are rapidly spending down the Constitutional Budget Reserve. When spent, if there is no fiscal plan in place, we may start spending down other accounts which will ultimately undermine our ability to manage our resources/savings and may eventually cause irreparable damage to our state’s economy.

The time factor means we must make “option” decisions, and we must do so promptly. This special session should be an excellent opportunity for that discussion, hopefully for that decision, which will allow Alaska to begin to move forward to address and resolve our fiscal and revenue issues.
Fairbanks Central Labor Council Labor Day Parade

By Jason Roach, Northern Field Representative

It was a beautiful day in Fairbanks on September 4th. APEA-AFT members and family gathered for the annual Labor Day Parade. The march began at the Noel Wien Library and ended with a family picnic at Pioneer Park. This year’s event featured Governor Walker as the Grand Marshall, as many locals took to the street to show community support for our Unions.

President Abel Bult-Ito (UA), Cyndee West (UA), Jason Roach (APEA/AFT), Katie Lubowicki (UA-Adjuncts), Gordon Williams (UA) and his two daughters.

Governor Walker graciously poses for a picture with Northern Field Rep Jason Roach and his wife Doni.

Governor Walker shakes hands with President Abel Bult-Ito (UA) and Cyndee West (UA). Al Agee (APEA/AFT) in the rear.

Our view as we marched towards Pioneer Park.
Spotlight and a Win!

By Peggy Weaver, United Academics - Adjuncts, Local 6054

As Union workers across the country recently celebrated Labor Day and the many advantages of working under a Union contract, I was pleasantly reminded again of one of our biggest advantages: The right to file and arbitrate grievances.

Unlike non-union workers, our disputes with our employers can ultimately be resolved by a neutral third-party arbitrator, acting as a judge – this means that the top manager does not make the final decision on our grievances.

With the assistance of APEA/AFT’s Southeast Field Representative Joel Hill, I filed the first grievance as a member of the UA Adjunct’s Union, United Academics – Adjuncts (Local 6054).

After UA’s denial of the grievance at the various management levels, we requested a meeting with the University President to discuss the issue and our anticipated upcoming request for arbitration. He responded and instructed payroll to send me a check for the minor monetary amount, resolving the grievance. We won! Sometimes it really isn’t just about the money, but about the principle of having and using your grievance procedure. Thanks for your support and belief in the process, Joel, and APEA/AFT!

More Medical Options

By Brian Penner, Southcentral Regional Manager

Increased technology and rising medical prices have resulted in some creative solutions hitting the market and many APEA/AFT members are benefitting from those innovations. One of the solutions, that many members enjoy, is the ability to take care of non-emergency issues from the comfort of their own home or while they are on the road. This service is provided by Teledoc, which allows users to access a medical provider through a phone app. One instance I heard about recently was someone taking a picture of their child’s pink eye and the remote doctor providing the prescription via this service, saving a trip to the clinic. Another service some plans are including is a travel benefit so that members can go to a medical center of excellence, in the lower 48, to have a variety of procedures performed, with no copay and no deductible. These programs typically provide airfare, lodging and a per diem for the patient and a companion. Some of them include 1st class airfare as part of the benefit. Besides the money savings for the member, they also benefit from the quality of care provided by a highly-experienced doctor who has performed thousands of the same procedure instead of only doing it rarely, as might be the case for an Alaskan provider.

Another medical option for the members of ACE and TOTEM is the ASD clinic that opened in midtown Anchorage. They are promising quick, thorough services in a brand-new office, in a brand-new building. Members who utilize the clinic will be able to do so with no copay and no deductible.

The State’s AlaskaCare and our HBEC representatives are working to make the local clinic concept available to State workers.
Assessing Members - My Union Story

By Anne Knight, Southcentral Field Representative

What Would Your Assessment Be?

I recently attending a union training where I was encouraged to share my “union story” as part of a facilitated discussion on how to assess members involvement in their union. My “union story” began 15 years ago when I was hired by the State of Alaska as a Retirement and Benefit Technician I. Like many state employees, I was promoted and moved from being a member of the General Government Unit to the Supervisory Unit and finally to the Confidential Employees Association. However, I was not an active member in any of these unions and I only remember attending one new member orientation meeting. I did participate in union sponsored trainings and meetings occasionally and completed surveys that were emailed to me. Looking back, I believe that if an Employee Representative, an active member, or a union staff member had asked me to help build solidarity by wearing a button or posting an informative sign on my door or on a bulletin board, I would have become an active member of my union and understood exactly how important it is to be involved and how member solidarity creates powerful unions.

As an APEA/AFT Employee Representative, you have opportunity to assess union members regarding how involved they are in union activities. Using the following ratings, how would you assess yourself?

1. **Leader:**

   A member who actively works to build their union by talking to co-workers, wearing buttons, and/or attending meetings. They might be a committee and/or board member, a negotiator and/or an Employee Representative.

2. **Supporter:**

   A member who is pro-union and supports building a stronger union, occasionally attends meetings and might wear a button and/or participate in surveys and/or trainings.

3. **Inactive:**

   A member who does not participate in union activities, does not step up to help when asked and may not understand what their union does for them. This may be a person who is active in the union, but speaks negatively about other union members or its leaders.

4. **Not Engaged:**

   A member or agency fee-payer who has stated they do not want to participate in any union activities.
I encourage each of you to rate yourself and your member colleagues, and seek opportunities or assistance with developing our 3’s and 4’s into 1’s and 2’s to build the strength of our union. Solidarity brings forth change and growth and improves the lives of all of our members. Below are four ideas for assessing APEA/AFT Members. If you have any questions about this process, please contact me via e-mail aknight@apea-aft.org

4 Ideas for Assessing APEA/AFT Members

1. Introduce yourself, explain your role in the union, ask them what union experience they may have, and tell your union story.

2. Ask open-ended questions to find out what issues they might have at work, and to see what motivates them to action.

3. Ask them what their union story is and if they know what their union does for them.

4. Extend a personal invitation to accompany you to a union event, such as a worksite meeting, training event or social gathering.
Juneau Central Labor Council Labor Day Picnic

By Joel Hill, Southeast Field Representative

Labor Day in the rain… Would we have it any other way? Rain or shine the BBQ goes on. Once again we had a well attended function in Juneau. Confidential Employees Association (CEA) may have had their best attendance yet. Supervisory Unit (SU) and Juneau Educational Support Services (JESS) were represented as well.

Union members mingling.

Terri Moore (L) and Angelica Johanson (R) from the Confidential Employees Association (CEA).

Inside the cabin.
Joel Hill (APEA/AFT) and Monica Southworth (NEA).

Joe Reeves (CEA) staffing the beverage and desserts counter.

Labor at its best.
FMLA and AFLA

By Gabe Hargrove, Southeast Field Representative

I often get questions regarding qualifications, benefits and other concerns regarding the FMLA and AFLA. Here is a brief overview of the FMLA and AFLA:

The FMLA refers to the Family and Medical Leave Act, which is a federal law that guarantees certain employees up to 12 workweeks of unpaid leave for personal or family medical issues each year, with no threat of job loss. The FMLA also requires that employers covered by the law maintain the health benefits for eligible workers just as if they were working. Employees are eligible to take FMLA leave if they have worked for their employer for at least 12 months, and have worked for at least 1,250 hours over the previous 12 months, at a location where at least 50 employees are employed by the employer within 75 miles.

Through FMLA, eligible employees are entitled to:

- Twelve workweeks of protected leave in a 12-month period for:
  - The birth of a child and to care for the newborn child within one year of birth;
  - The placement with the employee of a child for adoption or foster care and to care for the newly placed child within one year of placement;
  - To care for the employee's spouse, child, or parent who has a serious health condition;
  - A serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the essential functions of his or her job;
  - Any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent is a covered military member on "covered active duty;" or

- Twenty-six workweeks of leave during a single 12-month period to care for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness if the eligible employee is the servicemember's spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin (military caregiver leave).

AFLA refers to the Alaska Family Leave Act and is essentially a state version of FMLA (with some minor differences) only available to residents of Alaska.
AFLA requires covered public employers to provide up to 18 weeks in a 12 or 24 month period of paid or unpaid, job-protected leave to eligible employees for qualifying family and medical reasons. Employees are eligible if they have been employed by a covered employer for at least 35 hours a week for at least six consecutive months, or for at least 17.5 hours a week for at least 12 consecutive months immediately preceding the leave, and if there have been at least 21 employees within 50 road miles during any period of 20 consecutive workweeks in the preceding two calendar years.

Regarding its own employees, the State of Alaska has elected to substitute paid leave for unpaid leave for use in a family leave qualifying condition when it is available to the employee through accruals, donations, or other means authorized by collective bargaining agreements or state statutes. The State of Alaska has chosen to have the 12 or 24 month family leave entitlement start when an employee first takes leave for the qualifying condition. The State of Alaska has adopted a more generous policy that allows employees who meet the employment and hours worked thresholds to be eligible for family leave regardless of the number of employees within a given radius. For the duration of FMLA leave, the employer must maintain the employee’s health coverage under any group plan. There is no similar requirement under AFLA. Upon return from FMLA or AFLA leave, most employees must be restored to their original or equivalent positions with equivalent pay, benefits, and other employment terms.

For the use of family leave, an employee cannot realize the loss of any employment benefit that accrued prior to the start of an employee’s leave. Both Family Leave Acts make it unlawful for any employer to interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of any right provided under the Acts or discharge or discriminate against any person for opposing any practice made unlawful by the Acts or for involvement in any proceeding under or relating to the Acts.

Many of our members have taken advantage of the protections the FMLA and AFLA provide, whether it’s to care for a spouse, a need for protected time for medical appointments, or an employee’s own serious medical condition. If you have any questions regarding FMLA or AFLA, please don’t hesitate to reach out to APEA/AFT and we will work with you moving forward.
If your Local is having a meeting, participating in an event or doing something that you would like to share, please let us know and we’ll post it here.

**SOUTHCENTRAL REGION SUPERVISORY UNIT MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

**Monday, October 9, 2017**

Please join us at the:

Kodiak Alaska  
Department of Fish Game office  
351 Research Court  
in the  
Chiniak Conference Room

from noon to 1:00 for a discussion on:

Vote-By-Mail  
Upcoming SU negotiation  
Health Insurance Options  
Performance LMC  
Training LMC

Pizza can only be provided to those who attend the meeting in person. Please contact Jackie Bennett at 274-1688 (1-800-478-9992) to register so that we know how much food to order. If you assemble a group to call-in with you, we will reimburse you for pizza for the group. Please email your local office to register your group’s attendance and arrange reimbursement.

You can reach Jackie at jbennett@apea-aft.org.

For those of you in the Atwood Building, the Prudhoe Conference Room in Suite 1100 has been reserved. Please email Marta Mueller at marta.mueller@alaska.gov to RSVP and for room details. (Please bring your lunch.)

ACE, Local 4425 Meet and Greet!  
**Monday, October 30, 2017**

Come mingle with other members and meet your ACE Executive Board! All are welcome!
Anchorage School District Opens Vera Whole Health Clinic

By Jennifer Madsen, Southcentral Field Representative

ACE and TOTEM members have their own health clinic. In an effort to foster good health and contain rising health care costs, the Anchorage School District (ASD) has contracted with Vera Whole Health and opened their very own health clinic. Members of the Health Benefits Task Force toured the new facilities this month. The clinic is located on the second floor of the brand new Kuukpik building at 582 E 36th Avenue in mid-town.

The clinic is for the exclusive use of ASD employees and their dependents covered by the ASD’s health plan. The clinic’s focus is on preventive care, but also includes primary and acute care. Patients will be referred to a specialist or other appropriate provider if the issue cannot be handled in the clinic. The clinic will assist with follow up care for patients that have utilized the medical travel benefits. Follow-up care for patients having procedures in the lower 48 has been difficult at times. The hope is that participants will feel more comfortable utilizing the medical travel benefits knowing they have a physician that will continue to treat them when they return.

Jane Moore, MD is the primary physician at the clinic. Dr. Moore grew up in Alaska and attended the Anchorage School District before pursuing her higher education. Dr. Moore is being assisted by Kourtney Dunlap, FNP.

From left to right: James Hobson (ACE), Sandy Thompson (TOTEM) and Sharon Baker (TOTEM.)
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 Mike Lachelt (MSBEA).

Keeping Alaska’s Lifelines Open—and Safe

Mike Lachelt
Road Maintenance Superintendent
Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Mike Lachelt is dedicated to the job he’s held for 17 years as a Road Maintenance Superintendent I with the Mat-Su Borough north of Anchorage. He’s proud of the work he’s doing for Alaskans:

“Our borough roads are in as good a condition as we’ve ever seen them. It makes you feel good when you go out onto roads that are well-maintained. People are happy—and safe.

We have just three people to oversee more than 1,100 miles of roads. I put more than 50,000 miles on my vehicle every year. We monitor maintenance and keep track of outside contractors in five road service areas across the borough to keep costs down and maximize what residents get for the road service taxes they pay.

I have a lot of chances to interact with the public—responding to complaints or answering questions. That’s important. What we do is unique. Our work makes people safer. When we’re on the job, there are fewer accidents or injuries.”

Support those who work for OUR Alaska.
COULD FOUR BE THE MAGIC NUMBER?

Talk about exciting times! Special Sessions of the Alaska State Legislature have gotten fairly commonplace in recent years, but four (yes, 4!) special sessions in one year and, my goodness, an October Special Session – how exciting is that?!? Trick or Treat?

Well, let's hope this upcoming Fourth Special Session of our 2017 Legislature will be fruitful, because we seriously need some actual, tangible accomplishment to come out of an Alaska Legislative Session!

Alaska's revenue issues have become too serious to continue to be ignored and (mis)managed with the benign neglect, laissez-faire approach adopted these past several years by our businessmen-legislators. (These guys are "businessmen"? No wonder there's so many empty business properties!) Our state's credit rating has been reduced twice within the past year; next thing, we won't be able to get a loan, despite having sixty-some billion dollars tucked away in savings we can't, won't, shouldn't touch. Our faith in oil and oil's ability to save the state's economy increasingly appears about as well-placed as pre-WWII France's faith in the Maginot Line.

Oil will be an important part of Alaska's economy for many years into the future, but we should have learned long ago that we cannot rely solely on oil. We need a variety of broad-based revenue-producing programs and sources, and we need to be substantially more hard-headed (businesslike?) about how we produce revenue.

No one "loves" taxes, but there is a certain failure of reality to continue to allow many of our highest-paying, most lucrative and most highly-skilled jobs to be filled by non-Alaskans, who fly in and out of state without even shopping for underwear, new socks or deodorant, and go home to Texas, Louisiana and Oklahoma, where they pay income taxes in their home state on monies they earned in, and took home from, Alaska – from Alaskan oil. Allowing the continuation of this practice just boggles the mind with conjurings of humorous, offensive and teeth-gnashing jokes about different ways to allow oneself to be snookered... hornswoggled...exploited...robbed?

We must act, we must act and save ourselves from becoming the exploited and inept owners of businesses we cannot manage, equipment we cannot operate, wealth we cannot count, or resources we cannot harvest. We must have a Fiscal Plan, a plan that provides us with an outline of how we generate income and how we conduct our public business – how we assure our business partners and ourselves that we will conduct our business responsibly, prudently and effectively.

Hopefully, the fourth session will be the magic repetition that registers with our State Legislature and moves them to address and accomplish this imperative piece of public business. A fiscal plan, a fiscal plan! But for a fiscal plan, we might be in business!