Although many of us have been watching, and becoming increasingly concerned about, developments at the US Supreme Court and the progression of a series of cases that attack the ability of public sector unions to effectively and competently represent their members, the discussion has become more overt, more distressed and more intense as the most recent case, “Janus,” moves to oral arguments and a full hearing before the Court. Those arguments are currently scheduled for the end of this month, February 2018.

“Janus” is the latest in a series of lawsuits which have been working their way through the judicial process for the past several years. Each case asserts a variation of the argument that all public sector collective bargaining is political speech and no individual can be compelled to support or subsidize speech that they oppose or with which they disagree.

Therefore, the plaintiff’s argument goes, the agency fee, or “fair share” fee, established in collective bargaining agreements as union security provisions, should not be enforceable because bargaining unit members are compelled to support and subsidize the union’s “political speech”, which occurs when the union negotiates or advocates on behalf of the bargaining unit workers the union represents.

Nice, neat, cute argument, no? Protect people from an alleged representation they say they do not want or agree with, and simultaneously deny the union the means necessary to effectively represent the bargaining unit membership.

The end result of the lawsuit, as proposed by the plaintiffs, will be imposition of so-called right-to-work rules throughout the public sector workplace.
That is an ideal situation for opponents of organized labor: right-to-work (the “system” wherein no agency or fair share fee in lieu of mandatory dues may be collected in the unionized workplace) is known to materially weaken the union’s ability to effectively represent its members by creating divisions within the membership of the union, by encouraging dissension among the bargaining unit members represented by the union and by undermining the solidarity of the membership and denying income sufficient to fund the union’s responsibility to represent all members of the bargaining unit.

We have many, many mandatory fees and charges in our society – taxes, vehicle licenses, mandatory auto insurance, professional dues and fees – we are a large, diverse society that rarely enjoys unanimity of opinion – this attack against union security has nothing to do with personal freedom, but everything to do with undermining the union’s ability to effectively represent its membership.

Regardless of the Supreme Court’s ultimate decision, union members who stick together, who maintain solidarity and who recognize that they are the union and an attack against the union is an attack against them, the individuals who make up the union, will prevail over all efforts to undermine and nullify the members’ determination to establish and maintain reasonable balance between employer and employees.

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**Your Retirement may Depend upon it**

By **Brian Penner**, Southcentral Regional Manager

According to a recent study, 31% of American workers identified that health care is the most important issue in the United States. Almost half of American workers have seen their healthcare costs increase, a quarter of them have decreased their contributions to their retirement plans and almost half of them have decreased their contributions to other savings. Nearly a third of them have delayed retirement.

In many of our contract negotiations, members are being asked to either put up with reduced benefits or put more of their paycheck into supporting healthcare plans that don't necessarily deliver the best value for their needs. Working within these constraints requires that members be vigilant and proactive with regards to their health and their healthcare plans. There are no signs on the horizon that the healthcare system in the United States is going to improve (or get cheaper) anytime soon, so do yourself a favor and increase your health and financial fluency by making use of the resources provided by your employer and plan sponsors. Your retirement may be on the line.
As many of you longer tenure members probably know, Bruce Ludwig worked for APEA for 28 years, 25 of which he served as Business Manager. Bruce retired in 2012, having helped to guide APEA through good times and not-so-good times – the pipeline boom days, the post-pipeline bust, the post-organizing round of unit modifications and severing of subgroups from the basic, original APEA units and the dramatic and gritty re-building of APEA following those changes to the units. Bruce provided much of the organizational leadership that guided APEA to its current expansion into representing state employees, university employees, school district, local government and even a few private sector, non-profit employees. Bruce was a leader in APEA's decision to affiliate with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the AFL-CIO, and he served for many years as a leader in AFT's Public Employee Division and as Secretary-Treasurer of the Alaska State Federation of the AFL-CIO.

APEA was stunned this past week at the news that former Business Manager Bruce Ludwig had passed away – suddenly and quite unexpectedly.

Personally, Bruce leaves a wife, 3 daughters and a small group of grandchildren.

Professionally, he leaves a legacy of good and successful work, scores of counterparts, peers, mentees and fellows in the struggle for fair working conditions and universal application of "the American Dream."

Bon Voyage, Bruce – you brightened our day, lightened our load and had some fun fighting the good fight. It was good to know you as we trekked our way through the journey....
HAPPENINGS WITHIN THE NORTHERN REGION

By Michael Koskie, Northern Regional Manager

NORTHERN REGION ELECTION NEWS

Northern Region APEA/EPIC supported candidates did well in the recent City of Bethel City Council election. Both Mitchell Forbes and Thor Williams were voted into office after receiving support from APEA through the EPIC Committee. In Fairbanks 2018 state House elections, EPIC reviewed the candidate questionnaires, interviewed the candidates and recommends support for Kathryn Dodge, who is running for one of four Fairbanks area House Seats, along with Representatives David Guttenberg and Adam Wool.

LABOR-MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

What do the APEA bargaining units in the Fairbanks North Star Borough, Local 6070 and the Adjunct Professors at the University, as well as members at the City of Bethel and Nome, have in common? They all have working Labor Management Committees written into their Collective Bargaining Agreement.

This may be important under these restricted economic times because employees are often working in understaffed conditions and performing the work of another class without appropriate pay. They may be asked to work overtime, but take “comp time” instead of cash; or to work “stand by” for free!

These above actions may be contract violations. The traditional method for rectifying them involves the grievance process. There are, however, alternate methods for solving problems that don’t involve conflict such as regular Labor Management Committee (LMC) meetings, where the parties talk about problems, informally, before they rise to the level of a grievance/arbitration case. These types of talks can help forestall many time consuming and expensive conflicts.
Each year, early in the Legislative Session, the Alaska AFL-CIO holds its Legislative Conference in Juneau. The conference brings labor activists from throughout the state together to plan, work and engage every member of the Alaska Legislature and and inform them regarding issues that are important to Labor.

One of the highlights of the AFL-CIO Legislative Conference in Juneau was hearing from the legislators who are union members themselves talking about their role in the legislature and answering questions from the audience.

Through her work with the UAA Biology Department, Representative Geran Tarr is a member of United Academics Adjuncts. She is also a State Legislator, currently serving her third term. In addition to chairing the House Resources Committee where she works tirelessly on oil taxes and credits, she devotes considerable time helping working families including sponsoring bills on child care, paid sick leave, and gender wage equality. Tarr recently held a special meeting recognizing the ninth anniversary of Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Day, the first act signed by President Obama. The act changed the statute of limitations for presenting an equal-pay lawsuit so it begins on the date the employer makes the initial discriminatory wage decision, not the date of the most recent paycheck. She addressed the AFL-CIO conference and spoke on policies to help the working poor.

Liam Carnahan, an Employee Representative for the Southeast Supervisory Unit, gives a special thank you to Senator Bill Wielechowski for immediately asking hard-hitting questions of the administration last year soon after learning of attempts to privatize design engineering. Many legislators, including Representative David Guttenberg and Senator Click Bishop, then joined Wielechowski’s efforts to save the classified positions. The group efforts of SU members and several legislators eventually deterred the Department of Transportation from proceeding with the outsourcing plan.
Members of the Juneau Education Support Staff (JESS) met with Senator Dennis Egan and Representatives Sam Kito and Justin Parish to discuss matters pertaining to education, defined benefits retirement, and the Alaska Marine Highway. Pictured with Representative Sam Kito, are Jennifer Johnson, Cricket Curtain, and Jerome Kristjanson. All three work for the Juneau School District in various capacities and are serving on the JESS Board.

Ann Groeneveld teaches third grade in Valdez, where her school was one of two in Alaska named National Title 1 Distinguished Schools. The Department of Education & Early Development recognized the Hermon Hutchens Elementary School for exceptional student performance for two or more consecutive years through a demonstrated excellence in serving special populations of students. The school utilized a research-based curricula and instructional strategies and formed partnership to help provide opportunities to all students. Groeneveld is also active with the Valdez Federation of Teachers (VFT), one of APEA/AFT’s many diverse chapters. She recently met with Representative Harriet Drummond, Chair of the House Education Committee, about her work and issues relating to recruitment and retention of educators and staff. Groeneveld also met separately with her representative, George Rauscher, about many of the same issues. Congratulations to Ann and the other fine teachers with VFT!
AHMC, Local 6082 Long Time Union Officer and Activist Retires

By Jennifer Madsen, Southcentral Field Representative

Roy Anderson has been an officer and contract negotiator since the inception of Local 6082. Roy lives and works in Sitka, and has communicated and helped our AHMC members throughout Southeast Alaska. He has attended hundreds of meetings by teleconference while sitting alone in Sitka, but always participating and advocating on behalf of all AHMC members. He has traveled to Anchorage at least every three years to negotiate eight contracts with the Corporation. Some negotiations have gone smooth, other negotiations have been tough and not very pleasant. Roy always brings a smile and we wish our union brother the best with his well-earned retirement. The AHMC Executive Board presented Roy with a plaque for all his years of service to the union.

(L-R) Richard Langford, Jim Nitchman, Roy Anderson, Hap Pierce

Bryan Butcher, AHFC Chief Executive Officer presented Roy a 30-year pin and a certificate of appreciation signed by Governor Walker
The Koch brothers, the DeVos family and other wealthy, anti-union corporate interests will use the Supreme Court to try to take away your voice and your union.

Feb. 26 is when the Supreme Court case called Janus v. AFSCME is being heard. Through this case, these wealthy funders seek to defund and destabilize unions and make it harder for us to speak up for our students, patients, families and communities.

Strong unions mean stronger communities, and workers need and want strong unions. That’s why on Saturday, Feb. 24, we’re standing together for a Working People’s Day of Action.

Will you stand with us on Saturday, Feb. 24 by signing this petition?

Our union is our vehicle to fight for a better life for people, and, unfortunately, the funders of the Janus case see that as a threat to their power.

That’s why the Koch brothers and their allies committed $80 million to “defund and defang” unions last year. And then they used their massive tax breaks to increase that spending to $400 million to “break” teachers unions and go after public education and public services. The same wealthy forces that are attacking our unions are the ones trying to defund and destabilize public education and erode and suppress the right to vote. They are targeting every vehicle we have to enable opportunity and voice for working people and kids.

They may have gazillions of dollars, but we have people. And when they know the real deal, our communities support us.

As a union, we care, we fight and we show up. The reason we became teachers, nurses and health professionals, and public service employees is because we care for others—for the students, patients and public we serve. We fight for great public schools; for economic opportunity and security; for healthcare, so nobody has to be one illness away from bankruptcy; and for a secure retirement. We fight for our democracy and for a society that is safe, welcoming and sane—and that means fighting against hatred and bigotry in all forms. We fight for jobs, justice and freedom for all.

On Saturday, Feb. 24, solidarity is important. We’ll be standing with other unions, our community allies and others to show that we’re stronger together and that no billionaire-backed scheme is going to tear us apart.

Will you stand with us against this Koch-funded attack and sign this petition?

In unity,
Randi Weingarten
AFT President

P.S. There’s a great video on Facebook about the Janus case. This teacher explains why her union matters. Be sure to watch and share it.
Rally for the University of Alaska

By Cindy Spanyers, Classification/Legislative Liaison

During the very first days of February, about 100 supporters of the University of Alaska gathered in front of the State Capitol to rally on behalf of the budget submitted by the Regents. Among the speakers was Professor Abel Bult-Ito, President of United Academics Local 4996, who told the group, “At the university, it is all about the students (who) get enormous opportunities because of dedicated staff and faculty.” Two years ago, the legislature severely cut the university resulting in the loss of 1,183 positions and 50 programs. The Governor has proposed flat funding; the Board of Regents has requested $341 million, $24 million more to help cover increased costs. Several Legislators also addressed the rally including Representatives Adam Wool, Sam Kito, and Andy Josephson.
UA Student Alliana-Marie Salanguit poses at the rally with Fran Polumsky, a long-time activist with United Academics. Salanguit was an intern during the last legislative session: this year, she is now a full-time staffer with a member of the House Finance Committee.
An Employee Representative is an Educator

By Anne Knight, Southcentral Field Representative

An Employee Rep needs to educate members on what is happening in their union, in their department and with their employer. This earns the trust and respect of the members in their local, which in turns builds solidarity. Solidarity is needed to make a difference in the lives of all union members.

What an Employee Rep needs to know to educate members:
1. Current union activities
2. The benefits of being a union member
3. The local union and state federation history
4. The legislative process and impact on union members
5. How to organize members into an effective and visible presence

In order to educate members, an Employee Rep must:
1. Keep members fully informed
2. Discuss and explain policies
3. Clarify union objectives
4. Explain the legislative program
5. Stress the importance of being involved in the union

Alaska Housing Maintenance & Custodians Local 6082 Signs Three Year Agreement

By Jennifer Madsen, Southcentral Field Representative

Negotiators of AHMC met with the senior staff of Alaska Housing Finance Corporation to sign their successor agreement. The current agreement is set to expire on March 15, 2018. The union met with the Corporation and agreed to roll the contract for 3 years. This ensures increases and no losses in their current agreement. In these tough economic times with state and federal funding decreasing, the union believes this is a good contract and will preserve their hard-fought wages and benefits.

Pictured from left to right: Richard Langford, AHMC Negotiator, Roy Anderson AHMC 2nd Vice President, Jim Nitchman, AHMC President, Hap Pierce, AHMC Vice President, Bryan Butcher, AHFC CEO Executive Director, Mark Romick, AHFC Deputy Executive Director, Catherine Stone, AHFC Public Housing Director, Elaine Hodl, AHFC Human Resources Director & Michael Courtney, AHFC Housing Operations Director.
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.

ANNUAL ALYESKA TRAINING

April 23 - 27, 2018

UNION 101
AND
EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE
FIND ADDITIONAL CLASS SCHEDULE
WWW.APEA-AFT.ORG

GET APPROVAL TODAY
YOUR FUTURE SELF WILL THANK YOU FOR IT.

Our actions and decisions today will shape the way we will be living in the future.
Mobilization Blitz 2018

What is a mobilization blitz you ask? A mobilization blitz is often defined as a sudden, energetic, and concerted effort, typically on a specific topic and/or task.

APEA/AFT is hosting a Mobilization Blitz April 7 – 14, 2018! This is a perfect training opportunity for anyone who has wanted to learn what happens on an organizing campaign and receive training on the AFT organizing model. Organizing is a science and we all get better with training and practice! This is an opportunity to be part of building knowledge and solidarity on important issues that can impact members’ lives directly.

This Mobilization Blitz will be unlike any other type of hands-on training APEA/AFT has ever provided. Forty individuals, (20 from Alaska APEA/AFT locals and 20 from the Lower 48, AFT locals) will participate in extensive training before going out to have face-to-face conversations with approximately 1000 APEA/AFT members in Anchorage and the Matsu Valley. These conversations will happen during work-day, work-site visits and by visiting with members in the evening.

If you are interested in joining the 2018 Mobilization Blitz, please contact Annie Knight at aknight@apea-aft.org immediately.

Please note: APEA/AFT Annual Alyeska training is also happening in April. The dates for that training are April 23 – 27, 2017. Additional information regarding this training will be announced soon.
The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) announced changes to its drug testing regulation (49 CFR Part 40), which affects State of Alaska Employees within the Alaska Marine Highway System and safety sensitive positions requiring a Commercial Driver’s License.

Effective January 1, 2018, four semi-synthetic opioids have been added to the existing USDOT drug testing panel. In addition to being tested for marijuana, cocaine, amphetamines, phencyclidine, and opiates, employees who are required to undergo testing will also be tested for hydrocodone, oxycodone, hydromorphone, and oxymorphone. Some common names for these semi-synthetic opiates include OxyContin®, Percodan®, Percocet®, Vicodin®, Lortab®, Norco®, Dilaudid®, Exalgo®.

If an employee receives a ‘Positive’ drug test, the employer will immediately remove the employee from performing safety-sensitive functions and an interview will be scheduled with the Medical Review Officer to determine if there is a legitimate medical explanation for the result.

Employees are encouraged to review their department’s policy and procedures on this subject.

A summary of these changes, along with the Final Rule, can be found on the USDOT, Office of Drug & Alcohol Policy and Compliance website: https://www.transportation.gov/odapc.
March 1, 2018

Dear Local President,

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:

1. Southeast Region Seats. Primary and Alternate seats representing:
   - Juneau Education Support Staff Local 6096
   - Ketchikan Gateway Borough Employees Association Local 6137
   - Petersburg Municipal Employees Association Local 6132
   - Petersburg District Support Personnel Local 6131
   - Juneau Mental Health Professionals Local 6134

2. Northern Region Supervisory Seat. Primary and Alternate seats representing:
   - All of SU in Northern Region, APEA/AFT Local 4900. Nominations are limited to the Northern Region/Chapter of the SU.

3. Southcentral Region Supervisory Seat. Primary and Alternate seats representing:
   - All of SU in Southcentral Region, APEA/AFT Local 4900. Nominations are limited to the Southcentral Region/Chapter of the SU.

4. Valdez American Federation of Teachers & United Special Education Service Employees. Primary and Alternate seats representing:
   - Valdez American Federation of Teachers Local 3479
   - United Special Education Service Employees Local 4688

5. University of Alaska Federation of Teachers. Primary and Alternate seats representing:
   - University of Alaska Federation of Teachers Local 2404

6. United Academics Adjuncts. Primary and Alternate seats representing:
   - United Academics Adjuncts Local 6054

7. Confidential Employees Association. Primary and Alternate seats representing:
   - Confidential Employees Association Local 6133

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

Nominations shall be open until close of business Tuesday, May 1, 2018.

Please remember, all interested parties and candidates, including incumbent BOD members, must be nominated.

Thank you,

Michael Lund, Executive Vice President
APEA/AFT Board of Directors
Contract Negotiations between Fairbanks North Star Borough Employees Association (FNSBEA) and the Borough began in September with the official passing of proposals. It was evident from the start that the financial downturn was going to play into the negotiations and it would be up to the team to find an equitable solution. The Borough thought the majority of their budgetary problems could be solved by passing on costs to our members. The Borough wanted big increases to health premiums, no wage increases and the removal of language that was vital to keeping Local 6125 running strong. Through research and determination it was identified that the health plan was doing very well compared to other plans and large increases or cutting benefits were not needed to keep the plan viable.

After several months and numerous meetings at the table, the Local’s negotiators were able to reach a satisfactory tentative agreement with the Borough. The arrival of the F-35’s at Eielson Air Force Base and the construction boom that will follow helped curb the attempt to take away pay and benefit increases.

All negotiations are a compromise and we feel this new three-year contract will provide both stability and relief for our members. With the full endorsement of the FNSBEA bargaining team, the APEA Field Office will prepare to present the tentative agreement to the membership for discussion and ratification. More details will be provided after ratification by the membership. Without the leadership of Northern Region Manager Michael Koskie, President Cecily Hodges and the rest of the team holding strong, we would still be at the table. Thank you to everyone who participated. It was a complete team effort.
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 Jeff Culley, Alaska Higher Education Crafts and Trades Employees, Local 6070.

Jeff Culley has worked as a Boiler Firer at the University of Alaska’s power plant for almost a decade. His is a unique position that can present a different set of challenges on any given day.

Jeff is responsible for monitoring the online boilers and suggesting operational changes based on what his fires do and the loads they are operating under. “You have to put eyes on it, recognize the boiler’s behavior under the current conditions and know what adjustments are needed to get things back to normal conditions. If I don’t do my job well, it can put a billion dollars of infrastructure at risk,” said Culley.

Budget cuts have affected Culley and his team because it takes longer to replace everything, from people and parts, and that makes things a little more dangerous than they should be, he said. The power plant produces 90% of the heat and power for the campus, and having its own crews as employees, saves the University millions of dollars each year.

“We keep the lights on and the buildings warm in the winter and cool in the summer and we do it better and cheaper than any other group could.”

Support those who work for OUR Alaska.
We move closer and closer to our 9 – 13 April Mobilization – an opportunity to engage our Southcentral membership regarding the rapidly-approaching challenges to unions and how unions will “do business” in the upcoming future, and an opportunity to re-invigorate our members with their own individual, and personal, role in the well being and effectiveness of their union.

For “dyed in the wool” union activists, these mobilizations are a huge amount of work, but work which yields an equally huge amount of satisfaction, of fun, of comraderies, and of sense of accomplishment. Very often, the mobilization is also fun and enlightening to the members who are “recipients” of the mobilization’s activities and visits.

Half the mobilization force will be APEA staff and members; the other half will be AFT staff and members from other AFT state federation and Local Unions from all around the country. They will be assembled into eclectic teams, with a mixture of origins, backgrounds and career fields, trained and then dispatched to APEA/AFT workplaces and households, where they will educate and inform the membership and remind the membership that “this union is OUR union” – the members’ union, not some group’s union, not staff’s union, not the officers’ union . . . it is OUR union, the members’ union.

That sense, and recognition, of membership, of ownership, of symbiosis will, we hope, be re-charged and APEA/AFT’s entire membership will benefit from the renewed realization that unions are made of the membership, and that the membership cannot be denied when it acts with resolve and determination to address and accomplish its goals.

Even if you are not a “mobilizer-participant,” please look forward to the mobilization, welcome the mobilization when they visit and join the mobilization in making your Local Union a stronger and more effective organization that can effectively improve your workplace.