

NEA-Alaska/Retired

Fall 2019 • Volume XXXII No. 1

2019 NEA-Retired Annual Meeting

The NEA-Retired delegation holds its annual meeting just before the NEA Representative Assembly convenes. This year it was held at the Hyatt Regency Galleria in Houston, Texas, on Sunday, June 30th and Monday, June 31, 2019. The meeting is chaired by NEA-Retired President Sarah Borgman.

This year there were approximately 320 delegates from every state and overseas Department of Defense schools.

Speakers this year included NEA President Lilly Eskelsen Garcia, NEA Vice-President Becky Pringle, NEA Secretary Treasurer Princess Moss, and NEA General Counsel Alice O'Brien.

The discussions centered around the challenges we are facing as a result of the Supreme Court's Janus decision and what actions we are taking as a result. For the most part, to the disappointment of many anti-union organizations, membership has not been drastically affected and we have prevailed in the lawsuits filed against us.

President Eskelsen Garcia presented her proposed constitutional amendment to add an NEA membership category of non-educator friends and allies. Last year, the same amendment failed to get an endorsement from NEA-Retired and failed to muster the two-thirds vote necessary for adoption by the Representative Assembly.

This year, President Eskelsen and other NEA leaders reintroduced the proposed amendment as an important change that would strengthen our association as we stand up to the anti-union/anti public education organizations that continue to attack us. This time, the amendment passed and has been adopted.

Check out the NEA-Retired website, NEA.org/retired, for organizational information and more details from the meeting. Thirteen percent of NEA's total membership is comprised of NEA-Retired members, and the numbers are growing. We also donate significantly to the NEA Fund for Children and Public



President Lily Eskelsen Garcia

Education (NEA-PAC) and other NEA causes. NEA-Retired members serve on the NEA Board of Directors, Resolutions Committee, and in all aspects of leadership.

—Joseph Boyle

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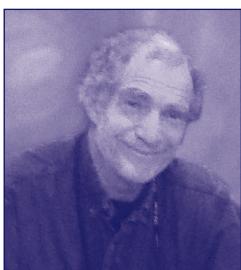
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President's Message**aka Kronberg's Corner**

The basic tactic employed by anti-public employee politicians is to attack public sector unions and the contracts those unions bargain for their members. In Alaska, the Dunleavy Administration has attacked public employee unions directly by attempting to put hurdles between employees and their unions through administrative action.

Other states have attempted to pass “paycheck protection laws” that require public sector unions to have employees join them on an annual basis. Given the ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court in the Janus case, their hope is that a large number of current members, given the easy out of having to sign new membership applications each and every year and being provided the benefits of union contracts whether they pay dues or not, will opt to not continue their membership. In the long run, unions cannot survive, let alone thrive, given such hurdles. It is one thing to pass laws that deprive unions of their basic bargaining power; it is quite another to attempt to do this through administrative fiat.

In Alaska, as in most other states, the rules concerning unions and collective bargaining are not created by executive orders, but by legislative action. Public sector unions have sued the Dunleavy Administration over this attempt to usurp an arena that belongs to the Alaska legislature. Dunleavy has, in turn, decided to spend a quarter of a million dollars of public money hiring a southern anti-union law firm from Virginia to represent it in the lawsuits brought by the unions. Imagine the cries of anger that would emerge from Governor Dunleavy’s mouth if public sector unions used dues dollars to pay for a top-flight law firm from D.C. or New York to represent the plaintiff unions in these cases.

This specific issue will be only temporarily decided by the current lawsuit. No matter who wins the initial lawsuit it is almost certain to be appealed. It could take years for the issue to be decided with any finality. In the interim our best bet is to change the people in the positions who make such poor choices for Alaska. What Dunleavy and his supporters will never realize is that the quality of public services including the quality of police, fire, and education services, not to mention the length of time we have to spend taking care of business in the Motor Vehicle Department are all likely to suffer. There is no doubt that attractive benefits that unions have bargained improved the quality of the people performing the services Alaskans depend upon. A weakening of the ability of public sector unions to bargain decent compensation and decent working conditions will surely reduce the ability of Alaskan schools and other public agencies to attract and retain the high quality employees they must have. The quality of services Alaskans will receive from public employees across the spectrum of all the services the state of Alaska provides will surely be negatively impacted by the loss of high quality employees. We can all do our part by voting for candidates at every level of government who understand that public sector unions play a big part in ensuring that Alaskans who need public services can receive them.

— Rich Kronberg

Editor: Barbara Stek

This newsletter is the official publication of NEA-Alaska/Retired, printed three times a year: October, February, and July. Retired members are encouraged to submit articles, as well as voice comments and concerns. Articles should be sent in Word via email to bwstekak@yahoo.com no later than the 1st of the publication month.



Salute To Susan Stitham

How do you say thank you to someone who has been so committed and effective in fighting for quality public education in Alaska? Susan has received numerous awards and accolades for her work as a leader within NEA-Alaska and NEA. She is in our NEA-Alaska Hall of Fame, and for the last five decades has held various positions in her local, state, and national association. This is the first year that she holds no elected office, so it seems a good time to add a simple, but heartfelt, THANK YOU!! Luckily, Susan will be a delegate at DA 2020 – and hopefully many more. Her service has been exemplary as a leader, a friend, and a mentor to so many of us. Salute!

—Judy Salo



NEA Representative Assembly

The 157th Annual Meeting of the NEA Representative Assembly was held at the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston, Texas, from July 3rd through July 7th, 2019.

The approximately 8,000 delegates vigorously debated and voted on four proposed constitutional amendments, six bylaw changes, three standing rule changes, ten national leadership positions, and 160 New Business Items.

In between the debates, we heard from 10 presidential candidates (all candidates were invited), our NEA leaders, the NEA Teacher of the Year, and the NEA ESP of the Year.

For more information, including video, go to: <https://ra.nea.org/ra-media/>. I especially recommend NEA Teacher of the Year Rodney Robinson's presentation. His description of success as the product of working with a great team in a fully funded program is inspiring. A recording of the presidential forum can be seen on YouTube.

The NEA-Alaska delegates met each morning at 7:00. The NEA-Alaska Preview Committee, chaired by NEA-Alaska State Director, definitely a morning person, Tammy Smith, met each day at 6:00am.

The debate over the constitutional amendment that would expand NEA membership to non-educator friends and allies was similar to last year. The biggest difference I observed was that the leadership had done more work informing delegates why they believed this amendment would benefit the organization, especially in political campaigns. Communications involving political issues are significantly less complicated with members than with non-members.

The debate was heated at times, but in the end the amendment passed easily. Constitutional amendments are not voted on the floor. Delegates cast secret paper ballots.

Attending the NEA-Retired meeting and the Representative Assembly is both exhausting and exhilarating. Be prepared for summer humidity, early mornings, long days, and to spend a few hundred dollars out of pocket. But nothing beats spending 10 days with 10,000 of your closest friends! Thank you for sending me.

—Joseph Boyle



NEA-Alaska Board of Directors Meeting

September 20-21, 2019 | Hank Harrison Conference Room

Melissa Case, from NEA, was a guest at the board meeting.

- There is a ballot initiative in the works which would ensure all students receive a quality education. The group organizing this initiative is Alaskans for Excellence in Public Education. The petition with 100 signatures and the filing fee were delivered to the Lt. Governor's office on August 29, 2019. The Lt. Governor has 60 days to move this issue forward. The decision is expected on September 30, 2019. The AEPE has hired a campaign manager and a treasurer. Judy Salo, NEA-Alaska/Retired Vice President, is the official chair of the committee. When it is time to gather the next batch of 29000 signatures, 7% of the signatures need to come from those who voted in the last election in 30 of the 40 House districts.
- The Board approved five new board members who were appointed over the summer: one from Region IV, three from Region VI, and one from Region VII.
- The Attorney General added a new interpretation to the Janus report which would require an opt in every single year to become an association or union member. The unions in the state of Alaska believe this is an overreach of the Janus report. If this interpretation is implemented by Governor Dunleavy, the unions and associations in this state are prepared to file a joint lawsuit. This could definitely impact the future of payroll deduction.
- The Kenai Education Association and Professional Education Support Association strike did not happen. A tentative agreement was reached in the early morning hours on the day the strike was supposed to start. The executive director of NEA-Alaska informed the Board that the staff and management learned to be ready if another job action should happen in the state. The Kenai Association presidents both stated that member engagement and having a good message which gathers community support are the keys to positive organizing.
- Bob Williams, member of the Alaska Retirement Management Board and chair of the board DC committee, did a presentation on Tiers 3 and 4, additional investments, and the concept of returning to a defined benefit. The presentation was excellent and it has been recommended that it be given to members at Delegate Assembly.

- NEA-Alaska Vice President Segue Grant gave an excellent report on the Saving Our Alaska Retirement (SOAR) committee. This report focused on the work of the committee and fit right in with the presentation done by Bob Williams.

Moved by the Budget and Audit committee:

- The committee recommends to the NEA-Alaska Board of Directors that \$100,000 be made available from the undesignated reserves to begin to fund Alaskans for Excellence in Public Education (AEPE); checks will be generated to the campaign.
- The board approved the ESP of the Year and the name will be released to the membership after the recipient receives the information that he/she has won the award.
– *Motion carried.*

Moved by Rick Morgan, second by Vicki Hewitt:

- I move that Tim Walters be appointed to PACE for Region IV.
– *Motion carried.*

Moved by Jasmine Adkin-Brown, second by Bobby LaSalle:

- I move to approve the revised awards policy.
- The highlights of the new and approved document: The awards are divided between internal and external awards.
- All the awards are now in the same format.
- All NEA-Alaska members who are award winners will be invited to DA.
- The deadline for the awards will be October 15 starting in 2020.
- The monetary amounts for the awards will be \$500, except ESP of the Year and Teacher of the Year will be \$2500.
– *Motion carried.*
- Thank you to Susan Stitham and Jasmine Adkins-Brown for co-chairing this committee.

The retired board members have been assigned to the following committees:

Rich Kronberg

- Governance
- Collective Bargaining and Employee Rights
- Executive Committee

Ron Fuhrer

- Government Relations and Community Outreach

Nancy Allen

- Communications
- Budget and Audit

Moved by Segue Grant, second by Nancy Allen:

- I move that the Board write off \$1173.59 for the 2017-2018 dues from the Chevak Education Association. (There were members who left the school district but were not dropped from the computer system.)

– Motion carried.

Moved by George Cromer, second by Valerie Brooks:

- I move that NEA-Alaska support Orange Shirt Day. The goal of this motion is to support wearing an orange shirt on September 30 to honor the survivors of Indian boarding schools and to remember the children who never made it home from these institutions.

– Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05.

The next NEA-Alaska Board meeting will be November 1 and 2, 2019, in the Hank Harrison conference room in the Anchorage office.

– Nancy Allen

Alaska Retirement Management Board Report - Sept. 19-20, 2019



All ARM Board meetings are now held in Juneau to save on the travel expense of bringing staff to Anchorage. The two-day meeting was preceded by four committee meetings: operations, audit, DC, and the actuarial committee meeting. It was a very busy three days.

The Board adopted the budget for FY'21, which after much discussion, restored travel for staff and the board to FY'19 levels. Staff needs to do due diligence with the funds and it would be irresponsible as a fiduciary to restrict the travel. The annual Real Assets investment plan was adopted for FY'20, with some minor adjustments made. Under the new asset allocation the amount invested in Real Assets has been reduced from 17 to 13%.

Bob Mitchell, CFO, and other investment staff made several presentations about the transition, ongoing, which reduces the number of active managers, brings more investments in-house, and saves significant dollars in fees. A total of 27 accounts have been eliminated to date and this required a good deal of coordination between the investment and accounting teams. The staff did an outstanding job to help simplify investments, save on fees, all the while monitoring risk and potential investment earnings.

The Actuarial Committee, chaired by trustee Norm West, moved the adoption of employer contribution rates for the FY'21 plan year: PERS DB 30.87% and TRS DB 30.47%. The PERS employers pay 22% and the TRS employers pay 12.56% as set in statute while the difference is paid by the state.

The Division of Retirement and Benefits reported that in FY'19, 1742 DC PERS members and 343 DC TRS members took full disbursement of their retirement funds; 289 PERS DC and 85 TRS DC took partial disbursement. Almost 70 million dollars was disbursed to these members who left employment.

In other business, the Board heard a presentation on Risk Parity and Cybersecurity and also approved the appointment to a vacant position on the three member Investment Advisory Council. The new member is Ruth Ryerson, who recently retired as the CEO of the Wyoming Public Pension system. Her first meeting will be at the next ARM Board meeting December 12 and 13, in Juneau. All members are welcome to call in with questions or to follow the meeting content on the DOR website.

– Gayle Harbo

Retiree Health Plan Advisory Board

Face to face meetings of the Retiree Health Plan Advisory Board have been cancelled due to budget cutbacks. So the August 7th meeting and the one following on August 22nd were conducted via teleconference. Discussions centered on Modernization of our AlaskaCare health plan and changes to the DVA plan.

The next RHPAB meeting will be on November 14, starting at 9am. In Anchorage, the teleconference will be in the Atwood Building; in Juneau, the meeting will be in the State Office Building.

You can access full board and committee minutes by going to the DRB website and searching for RHPAB.

— Barbara Stek

Don't Forget Magnesium

Magnesium plays an important part in your overall health. It provides a therapeutic role as well as a preventive one and can benefit such conditions as diabetes, osteoporosis, migraines, and cardiovascular diseases.

The following is a list of some of the foods which are rich in magnesium:

- almonds • broccoli • quinoa • spinach
- avocados • sunflower and pumpkin seeds

*Excerpted from Life Advice published by MetLife
(International Journal of Endocrinology)*

DVA Alert!!

All AlaskaCare retirees should have received the information on upcoming changes to the dental portion of the Dental-Vision-Audio Plan. If you are content with your current coverage - that would be the Standard Plan - you do not need to do anything. However if you wish to return to the Legacy Plan, you need to make your decision known by November 27, 2019.

The comparison chart should help you decide. Still have questions? Hopefully, you have been taking advantage of the AlaskaCare Townhall teleconferences every month. There are two more coming up in November - the 7th and the 21st. If you are not already registered, go to the State of Alaska Division of Retirement and Benefits website to do so.

You want to make sure to check if your dentist (and for that matter, other health care providers) are in-network. Make note of premium differences between the two plans. Those premiums are for the entire DVA program. There have been no changes to the audio or vision portion.

On the last AlaskaCare Townhall on October 22, a dentist presented some information I found interesting. Did you know that too many cleanings can be bad for your teeth? I also learned that the polishing procedure may actually remove some enamel. Do be sure to follow the guidelines that your dentist has determined are necessary for your good health.

— Barbara Stek

Health Issues?

Seniorliving.org has examined websites for seniors which can be viewed for health information, ones which provide useful and accurate information.

webmd.com

The information here is written by doctors and is easy to read and understand.

mayoclinic.com

This site is easy to explore. You can find the basics or hit the “in-depth” tab for further information.

nihseniorhealth.gov

You are able to pick a topic by its first letter. You will find the basics plus risks and treatment options.

medicare.gov

On this site you are able to find doctors and medical facilities. You can learn which tests are covered as well as additional care and support.



Election News

You Need to Know

The following NEA-Alaska/Retired members will be representing you at Delegate Assembly 2020.

Cindy Aillaud	Barb George	Ernie Kirby
Henry Anderson	Beverly Goad	Faith Lee
Bonnie Barber	Gayle Harbo	Pamela Lloyd
Bill Bjork	Hank Harrison	Don Oberg
Joseph Boyle	Betty Hertz	Trisha Patterson
Loretta Christie	Andy Holleman	Trena Richardson
Steve Click	Nancy Hummel	Mari Torgerson
Pat DeSmet	Michael Husa	Judy Salo
Teresa Duncan	Gina Ireland-Kelly	Barbara Stek
Karen Eddy	Stanley King	Susan Stitham

Christine Villano
James Villano
Graham Ward
Stephanie Winsor

First Tier Alternates:	Second Tier Alternates:
Curtis Watkins	Cheryl Childers
Linda Horstman	Deedee Sorensen
Emilia Eaton	Dixie Alms
Kurt Mueller	Marilyn Pillifant
Sharon Penttila	Sara Hannah
Bryant Christensen	Sherry Barrett
Roxanne Abajian	
Susan Dunham	

A Great Mystery Series – Maisie Dobbs

This 13 book series, written by Jacqueline Winspear, recounts much of the history of WWI and the participation by the British. The series, first published in 2003, takes place in London for the most part.

Maisie Dobbs is a young woman who went into service shortly after her mother died, but her thirst for knowledge was soon apparent to her employer. She was helped and tutored and eventually went to college, but this was interrupted by the advent of WWI. She took nurse's training and went to France to aid the wounded. Upon returning to England after the war she established her own investigating service.

The books are well written, with great descriptions of London and the countryside, and she does a fine job of character development. The first book is

titled *Maisie Dobbs* and the latest book, published this year, *The American Agent*, deals with the late 30s and the advent of WWII. Enjoy!

— Gayle Harbo





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**Thanks for Voting!
Look inside for the list of elected delegates to DA 2020!**

WE NEED YOU!!

Delegate Assembly participants, we need you “beary” much!!

Please bring your bear related items to DA so that we may use them as rewards for new members to our fabulous organization.

“Bear” with us as we strengthen NEA-Alaska/Retired.

– Barb George and Pat DeSmet



*Please make sure we have
your current email address.
Contact Tamara Monroe at
274-0536 to make changes.*



Calendar of Events

November

14 Retiree Health Plan Advisory Board Meeting
18-22 American Education Week
20 Education Support Professionals Day

December
NEA-Alaska Office Closed
Dec. 24 thru Jan. 2

January

1-2 NEA-Alaska Office Closed
15-16 NEA-Alaska Board of Directors Meeting
16 Retired Caucus Meeting
– open to all members
16-18 NEA-Alaska Delegate Assembly (Anchorage)