

# NEA-Alaska/Retired

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## Cruisin' with Covid

The past few years have been devastating to many businesses, but in particular to the cruise ship industry. The challenges to get back to normal have been extensive and costly. Alaska, which prior to Covid, welcomed over a million

tourists each season, from May to October, has taken a great revenue loss and the ports in Southeast have, in particular, felt the blow to their economies. Luckily, the past summer saw a surge in tourists visiting our

great land. We hope that 2023 will bring even more visitors and an economic boost.

Vaccinations and testing requirements have been lifted on most voyages. Some destinations, however, have their own protocols. You may still find that many passengers as well as crew members are still wearing masks. It is up to the individual to guard his/her own safety. The crews do an exceptional job trying to keep things clean and fortunately most ships have many hand-washing stations, enhanced air filtration, and medical grade disinfectants along with an expert medical team.

It has been a trying time for both cruise ship companies and passengers, but perhaps the most affected are the many crew members who come from over 50 countries to work on the ships. For two years they have had no income. That includes all the supporting businesses in the ports that load and supply the ships and the people who help passengers embark and disembark. It can only improve.

It is a wonderful way to travel, especially for seniors, with everything provided. Food is plentiful, entertainment is varied, and your room steward is indispensable. There are so many different itineraries with guided tours available at the various ports – everyone should find something they would enjoy.

So if you go, keep yourself safe. You are responsible to make it a rewarding journey and for respecting the health and well-being of the crew and your fellow passengers.

– Gayle Harbo



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Roxanne Abajian | Barbara Stek

# President's Message



Greetings Members,

As I write this message, I'm in Providence, Rhode Island, with my husband and our younger son. While enjoying the beautiful fall colors and weather in Providence, I'm aware there is much for which to be grateful. I'm thankful for my family and friends, and for the opportunity to travel to see them. I'm also thankful for the camaraderie, the voice and

strength of NEA-Alaska/Retired members, and the lifelong friendships developed through involvement with our union.

**Caring and Serving:** During recent elections across the United States, NEA-Retired educators volunteered in local and state elections, led Get Out the Vote (GOTV) efforts, and voted. We showed we care about electing reasonable and education-friendly candidates. We made a difference.

In Alaska, through the efforts of a statewide, non-partisan coalition, a Constitutional Convention was rejected. The defeat of this risky ballot measure is good news for retirees.

Some retired educators serve in elected offices. A shout-out and congratulations to the following retired educators for their successful elections:

**Chrya Sanderson**, elected President of the Fairbanks North Star Borough School Board.

**Sara Hannan** (Juneau), re-elected to the Alaska House of Representatives.

**Dan Ortiz** (Ketchikan), re-elected to the Alaska House of Representatives.

There are many ways NEA-Alaska/Retired members engage in service to their communities: substituting; mentoring new educators; volunteering at schools and for youth groups, libraries, and churches; and working with non-profit organizations, including our own NEA-Alaska/Retired. Thank you, retirees, for sharing your time and talents.

**Delegate Assembly:** Retired educators remain involved in our union. Thirty-five elected delegates and four members of the Region R Board of Directors will volunteer their time at Delegate Assembly, January 19-21, 2023. Retired delegates will join fellow delegates in discussion and debate to forward the mission and goals of NEA-Alaska, and to support the interests of NEA-Alaska/Retired.

As you read in the November 16th NEA-Alaska AKtivist, six pre-filed bylaw amendments were submitted by the November 1 deadline. Two of these six might be of particular interest to retired members:

**NEA-Alaska Bylaw Article III, Section 2, subsection C:** NEA-Alaska/Retired is proposing an amendment to the NEA-Alaska Bylaws which would cap their seats on the NEA-Alaska Board of Directors at four. The NEA-Alaska/Retired Board of Directors and the NEA-Alaska Board of Directors recommend: Do Pass.

**Bylaws Article III, Section 1, A3 & B3 Term of Office:** This item proposes adjusting the NEA-Alaska Bylaws to allow for the President and Vice President to serve as many as three successive terms. The current Bylaws allow for only two successive terms. The NEA-Alaska Board recommends: Do Pass

*Cont. on pg 3*

Editor: Barbara Stek

*This newsletter is the official publication of NEA-Alaska/Retired, printed three times a year. 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.*

*"President's Message" Cont.*

These items will be taken up during the Governance, Constitution, and Bylaws Committee Report at Delegate Assembly. If you have questions about these amendments, please contact your Region R Directors: Barb Stek, Chris Villano, Judy Salo, or Roxanne Abajian.

**Elections:** Are you considering being more involved with NEA-Alaska/Retired? Yes? Good! Open positions for which you can submit your nomination include:

- One (1) seat on the NEA-Alaska/Retired Board of Directors – two-year term
- Two (2) seats on the NEA-Alaska Region R Board of Directors – two-year term
- Two (2) delegates to Representative Assembly 2023 – one-year term
- Two (2) Region R PACE representatives – two-year term

**Information:** At the end of September, the NEA-Alaska/Retired Board of Directors and NEA-Retired Committee members met for a work session and board meeting in Girdwood, Alaska. We were joined by NEA-Alaska President Tom Klaameyer; NEA-Alaska Executive Director Glenn Bafia; Uniserv Director Val Baffone; Government Relations Director Matt Moser; and Communications Director Zac Mannix. The sessions were extremely productive. With assistance and guidance from the NEA-Alaska President and staff, the Retired leadership team discussed the mission of NEA-Alaska/Retired and clarified goals and direction for our local. We identified tasks to help meet our goals. We began the work of revising and updating our Retired Policies. We also outlined the agenda for our first Policy Assembly, scheduled for the Thursday prior to Delegate Assembly 2023.

In July, I submitted an application for the NEA-Retired Organizing Grant and requested the maximum amount of \$7,000. NEA-Retired approved the application and awarded NEA-Alaska/Retired the \$7000. Thank you, NEA-Retired!

The NEA-Retired spring conference will be in San Francisco, March 12-14, 2023.

At this annual leadership conference, retired members and staff develop and hone leadership skills, network with colleagues from around the country, and learn how to build thriving NEA-Retired affiliates. The conference is open to all NEA-Retired members. Online registration opens January 5, 2023. At that time, a link will be available at [www.nea.org/retired](http://www.nea.org/retired) to register for the conference and make hotel reservations. The non-refundable conference registration fee of \$120 covers provided meals, conference materials, and refreshment

breaks at the conference.

The theme of this year's conference is: JOY, JUSTICE, EXCELLENCE: The strength of educators. The brilliance of students. The power of community. The experience of retired.

As 2022 is drawing to a close, I wish you good health and a holiday season filled with warm moments and cherished memories.

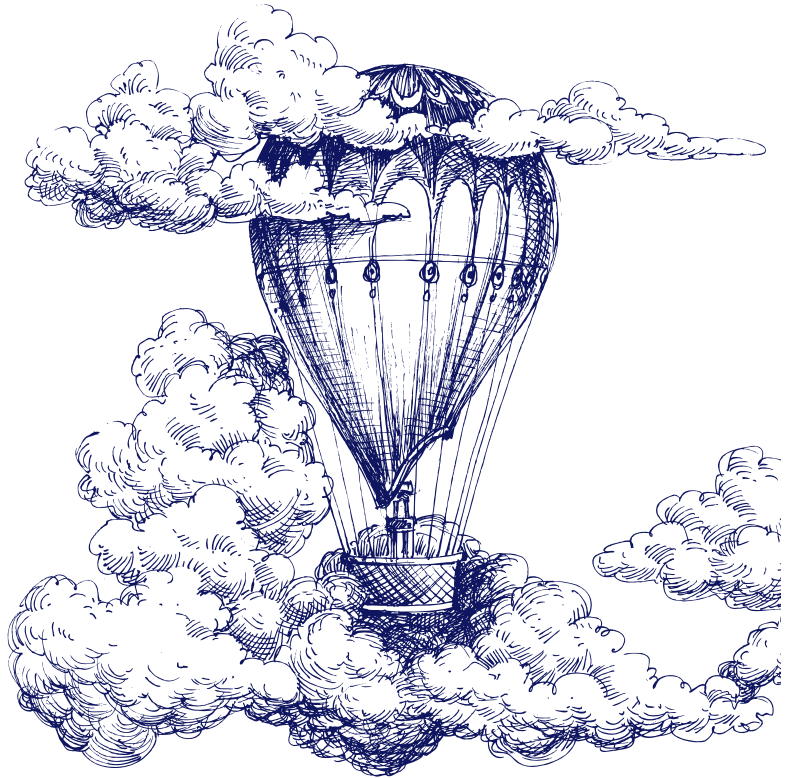
Until next time ...

– Roxanne Abajian

## Delegate Assembly 2023 – Come Soar with Us!

Pretty soon we hope you will be helping us soar! Our theme for the upcoming DA centers around hot air balloons. So please be looking for fun things you can donate for our giveaways.

Our membership table will be buzzing with excitement – wait a minute that was last year! This year we will be flying high! Soar with us!



Please make sure we have your current email address. Contact Makana Bender at 274-0536 to make changes.



## Retiree Health Plan Advisory Board Update

The RHPAB has met twice since the last newsletter. On September 27th the Board addressed the relatively new and rapidly advancing area of Gene-based Cellular Innovative Therapies. Treatments of this type can cost \$600,000 - \$2.5 million. We adopted a resolution supporting an update to the plan that ensures that claimants are receiving this type of treatment from providers who are approved to offer this very specialized type of therapy. The cost of the drugs used will not count toward the plan maximum and the plan will cover travel (up to \$10,000) to an authorized genetic therapy treatment center. This change in coverage will take effect on January 1, 2023.

Along with the addition of Preventative Care which began last January, this is a continuance of our efforts to modernize our retired health plan to respond to medical advancement in a manner that best meets the needs of our members.

On November 3rd the RHPAB met again to consider more items from our list of Modernization Topics. We reviewed the proposed changes to the Retiree Insurance Information Booklet that was out for public comment and took more

public testimony. The specific changes are available for your review on the Alaska Division of Retirement and Benefits website. The entire plan booklets are also available and the website is very user friendly and up-to-date.

We had a very informative presentation from an organization called Surgery Plus.

This organization provides information on quality providers, savings to the plan through bundled rates, and coordinated care and travel arrangements. We have been discussing the advantages of this type of plan that might help members who are facing a planned surgery.

The Board's Modernization Committee will meet on January 4th and the full Retiree Health Plan Advisory Board will meet on February 9th.

Check out the DRB website.

Take care of yourself, and be well in 2023!

– *Judy Salo, RHPAB Chair*

# Election News

## *You Need to Know*

**The following NEA-Alaska/Retired members will be representing you at Delegate Assembly 2023.**

Nancy Allen	Steve Click	Stanley King	Sharon Penttila
Annie Baker	Pat DeSmet	Ernie Kirby	Marilyn Pillifant
Bonnie Barber	Teresa Duncan	Faith Lee	Chris Provost
Sherry Barrett	Emilia Eaton	Bonnie Lind	Trena Richardson
Emily Becker	Barbara George	Pamela Lloyd	Tammy Smith
Sherry Blizzard	Gayle Harbo	Howard Maxwell	Susan Stitham
Mary Bohanan	Donald Hennessey	Doug Oliverson	Kristina Tornqvist
Valerie Brooks	Betty Briggs Hertz	Tim Parker	Greg Turner
Loretta Christie	Nancy Hummel	Rebecca Paul	

*By virtue of their positions on the NEA-Alaska Board of Directors, Chris Villano, Judy Salo, Roxanne Abajian, and Barbara Stek are retired delegates as well.*

## NEA-Alaska Board of Directors Meetings

**September 30 – October 1 • November 11 – 12**

I attended my first NEA-Alaska Board meeting as your retired representative in late September. Also present at that meeting were Roxanne Abajian and Judy Salo.

Board members from each region presented brief reports on timely information. New appointments to the Board were approved: Phyllis Clough from Region II and Brytan Felter from Region V. Marilyn Pillifant was approved as a new PACE member from Region R – that's us!

NSO bargaining is happening and a bargaining team was appointed: Zac Mannix, Glenn Bafia, Nathan Erfurt, KD Roope, Barb Schneider, and Segue Grant.

The group approved a donation of \$20,000 to aid in the recovery efforts of Western Alaska after the devastating weather recently. Impacted locals may apply for the money. We will also reach out to NEA to seek more funding.

We made recommendations regarding bylaws and policy changes which will be presented at Delegate Assembly 2023. One of them was our own bylaws change proposal which would limit our representation on the state board to no more than four (4) seats. As our retired numbers grow, we could be adding seats at a rapid pace. We do not want to become the largest representation on the board.

At the close of that meeting, we wanted to make sure that we encouraged all of our members to vote!

Now we head to the November meeting – the last one before DA. We were all able to be present – Judy, Chris, Roxanne, and I. One of the recurring themes to the region reports

was how to address the shortage of educators. Many locals have a variety of unfilled positions, many in the Special Education area. Quite a few regions are in bargaining talks and unfortunately reaching impasse.

We moved to approve the Affirmative Action 3-1.g plan which the Human and Civil Rights Committee proposed. This will be forwarded to NEA.

Some changes to the Standing Rules at DA were presented. Most felt that the changes were positive.

The search for a new Executive Director yielded 4 applicants, two of them were invited to an in-person interview in December. There was a zoom meeting on December 8th to announce the results.

Our very own Christine Villano is on the RAT Team – Reading Action Team. There was a webinar on the 7th of December at 4:30 addressing the requirements of the law.

Mary Nibbelink has resigned from her position as Executive Secretary with NEA-Alaska and was presented with a gift card in recognition of her many years of dedicated service. Malina Colon is currently working in that position.

There is a lot going on at these meetings so I have only included the highlights. I am sure that any of you who previously served on the Board can attest to that!

– Respectfully submitted by Barbara Stek on behalf of the NEA-Alaska Region R Directors.

### Sarah Says December, 2022

'Tis the Season of Giving! Many of our states have a great way of giving: scholarships, clothing/shoe collections, backpack snacks/lunches, school supplies, community giving, tutoring, etc. It is always heart-warming to read about your efforts. As you consider more giving this season, please consider the great gift of time. Children and elderly can always use the time you can spare them, the touch, perhaps even reading or just plain old sitting and visiting whether talking or playing some games. Also, please consider the gift of time for your Retired local or state work. Volunteer to serve on a committee, to make calls, write cards or newsletter articles, lead a project that

you've talked about but haven't put into action yet. Your local or state president would be delighted with YOUR gift of time. It's a unique gift only you can give!

– Sarah Borgman, NEA/Retired President





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Look inside to see your elected Delegate Assembly representatives!



*Wishing everyone a safe,  
healthy, and happy 2023!*

## Calendar of Events

### January 2023

- 17-18 NEA-Alaska Board Meeting
- 19-21 67th Delegate Assembly
- 22 NEA-Alaska/Retired Board Meeting

### March

- 12-14 NEA-Retired Spring Conference
- 31 NEA-Alaska Board Meeting

### April

- 1 NEA-Alaska Board Meeting

### June

- 4-5 NEA-Alaska Board Retreat

### July

- 2-6 Representative Assembly – Orlando