

NEA-Alaska/Retired

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Changes to the AlaskaCare Retiree Healthcare Coverage

It is important to try to keep up to date with changes to your AlaskaCare healthcare coverage. Every year in November, you are allowed to change which plan you choose for Dental, Vision, and Audio. You may choose the Standard Plan or the Legacy Plan. The Department of Retirement and Benefits sent emails, fliers, and information on side-by-side differences last fall. If you discover that you did not select the correct plan for you, you may choose the other option in November of 2026.



Additionally, there were some other changes made to the medical coverage:

- **Diagnostic colonoscopy and breast imaging services from a network provider**

Teladoc:

* All Teladoc services require a co-pay. The price varies from \$25-\$58.

- Teladoc General Medical Consultation:
- Cold and Flu symptoms, Allergies, Bronchitis, Pink Eye, Respiratory infections, Sore throat, Sinus problems
- Teladoc Dermatology – Skin: Skin problems, Consultation
- Teladoc Caregiver Consultation
- Teladoc Behavioral Health Consultation

* (If you do not show up for your Teladoc behavioral health visit, or cancel with less than 24 hours' notice, you may be charged a \$50 fee. This fee is your responsibility and is not payable by the plan).

Updates to Support the Change to Include Foreign Ambulance Services.

- The Medical Plan pays ambulance costs worldwide and travel expenses within the contiguous limits of the United States, Alaska, and Hawaii.

For more information, you can read your online [AlaskaCare Booklet](#).

You can also get information, keep up to date, and have your questions answered by listening to the AlaskaCare Retiree Town Halls. This year, they are occurring

quarterly. The next one will be April 16, 2026, at 10:00 am Alaska Time. If you go to the [AlaskaCare Retiree Town Hall](#), you can request to participate in advance, and you will receive a call a few minutes before the Town Hall starts. You can listen to others' questions and also have the opportunity to ask your own. Remember, these are questions that relate to the plan and not to your own personal care. Additionally, you can get information on how to listen to the upcoming [Retiree Health Plan Advisory Board \(RHPAB\)](#) meeting; these meetings are recorded, and you can listen to them at your convenience.

– Trena Richardson

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President's Corner



Greetings and Happy New Year! Speaking of the new year, Happy Federal Income Tax Deadline Time! The deadline isn't until Wednesday, April 15, 2026.

If you, like me, receive your monthly Defined Benefit Pension payment directly deposited into your bank account, you most likely don't frequently check your "Pay Stubs" or "Warrants," as the state of Alaska refers to them. I reviewed

my December and January Warrants, anticipating tax season, and observed that my net payment had decreased in the new year. It wasn't my imagination! I checked at the Alaska Division of Retirement and Benefits (<https://drb.alaska.gov>), and I discovered that there had been some sort of computer input error, and too much money had been withheld.

In the words of Mr. Christopher Novell, Chief Financial Officer for the Division of Retirement and Benefits, "Shortly after payments were issued, we identified a processing error that caused higher than expected federal withholding for certain members."

They are working on the problem and hope to have it corrected by the time the February Warrants are issued...or maybe March. You can read all about it here: <https://drb.alaska.gov/news/2026/0122-taxWithholding.html>.

For more information concerning retiree benefits, go to <https://drb.alaska.gov>. From that page, you can navigate by clicking the "myRnB" tab at the very top of the page; to see your Warrants and other personal information, you'll have to log on to your MyAlaska account. It's a good time to make sure that your personal information is up to date.



Policy Assembly 2026

Delegate Assembly

The NEA-Alaska Delegate Assembly (DA), which happens once a year, took place from January 15th to 17th, 2026, at the Hotel Captain Cook in Anchorage, Alaska. In conjunction with DA, we held our NEA-Alaska/Retired Policy Assembly on Thursday, the 15th, from 9 AM to 4 PM. Check your AKtivist, which is emailed to you, for more information on this year's DA. I want to point out that during those three days (plus travel), attendance was taken, meetings began early, and frequently continued late into the evening. Discussions and debates were sometimes long, and the chairs were not as comfortable as we would have liked after hours of sitting. Our NEA-Alaska/Retired Board of Directors met on Sunday, January 18th, from 9 AM to 2 PM.

There were 41 nominees this year for the 28 open delegate positions. The nominees were willing to dedicate 3 or more long days and nights supporting our organization.

In my opinion, contested elections are a sign of a healthy organization. If you attended Delegate Assembly, thank you. Please encourage your friends and colleagues to run in the next election. I hope to see you next year!

– Joe Boyle



Alaska Division of Retirement & Benefits



Tax Withholding Correction



2026 NEA-Alaska/Retired Delegates.

5th Row: Stanly King, Mike Husa, Christopher Provost, A Bryant Christensen, Ernie Kirby, Teresa Duncan Dianne Shibe, David Horwath, Steve Click

4th Row: Bob Williams, Joseph Boyle, Annie Baker, Mari Torgerson, Susan Stitham, Faith Lee, Pamela Lloyd, Trena Richardson

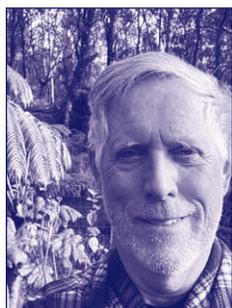
3rd Row: Kristi McEwen, Howard Maxwell, Lori Mertes, Nancy Hummel, Roxanne Abajian, Deedie Sorenson

2nd Row: Barb George, Rebecca Paul, Barbara Stek, Gayle Harbo, Loretta Christie, Renee Rindone, Tod Hindman

1st Row: Sandi Ryan

Not shown: Cindy Lou Aillaud, Pat DeSmet, Whit Aillaud, Beverly Goad, Kate Ortega and Tim Parker

What is the NEA Resolutions Committee?



NEA-Alaska/Retired has one member on the NEA Resolutions Committee based on the number of NEA members in our state association.

NEA-Retired includes retired members from all over our country, including educators who retired from our US Department of Defense schools. As NEA-Retired, we are a large enough

association in the NEA family to have six elected members on the NEA Resolutions Committee. Currently, I am in my second term on the Resolutions Committee; he is running for a third one-year term. I represent all of NEA-Retired, not just NEA-Alaska/Retired members.

The NEA Resolutions Committee is composed of about 185 members. The committee “meets” twice a school year (September through August)—a winter Zoom meeting and an in-person summer meeting just before the annual NEA Representative Assembly. Both Resolutions Committee meetings are two days in length. The task is to write new resolutions to cover new situations, as well as revise, update, and edit the continuing resolutions (resolutions “live” from year to year until they are formally deleted).

From our NEA website (nea.org): “The NEA Resolutions are formal expressions of opinion, intent, belief, or position

of the National Education Association (NEA). They are designed to articulate the Association’s stance on various issues in clear and concise language. The resolutions are broad in nature and are not action-oriented; instead, they guide the Association’s activities and funding decisions.”

When the Resolutions Committee completes its work at the summer meeting, a report is written providing the most up-to-date wording of resolutions that are new or that have been revised/edited in some way. That report goes to the full NEA Representative Assembly to be considered, debated, revised, and eventually accepted by the 5,000 to 7,000 delegates to that assembly.

The election of the six NEA-Retired members on the Resolutions Committee takes place at the Retired Annual Meeting (the RAM) just before the NEA Resolutions Committee summer meeting. Only state delegates to that RA can run for the NEA Resolutions Committee retired positions, and only state delegates can vote in the RAM election.

I hope this gives you a better idea of how this committee works and is an important part of the National Education Association. If you have any questions, please contact Steve/me at smcfai@hotmail.com.

Alaska Retirement Management Board (ARMB) December 2025 Meeting Summary

The Alaska Retirement Management Board convened its quarterly meeting on December 3–4, 2025, in Anchorage, with trustees, staff, and advisors participating both in person and via hybrid formats. As of late 2025, the ARMB oversees approximately \$47.8 billion in total assets, comprising defined benefit and defined contribution plan assets. The Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) has \$27.8 billion, and the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) has \$12.5 billion.

Leadership and Governance

- The Board elected its 2026 officers: Bob Williams, Chair; Sandi Ryan, Vice Chair; and Mike Williams, Secretary.
- Reappointment of Josh Rabuck to the Investment Advisory Council for a three-year term (2026–2029) was approved.

Investment Oversight and Policy

- The Board approved proposed updates to the Investment Policy & Procedures Manual, reflecting annual review and enhancements to governance practices. This took much more work than initially thought, and special thanks are owed to the ARMB Liaison, Alysia Jones.
- Due to an ownership change, Pathway Capital Management was added to the Board’s Watch List.
- The FY2025 Private Equity Annual Tactical Plan received approval, aligning with portfolio strategy and risk management goals.

Actuarial and Financial Matters

- The Board accepted and certified actuarial valuation reports for the Judicial Retirement System (JRS) and National Guard and Naval Militia Retirement System (NGNMRS) prepared by Gallagher.
- Currently, the JRS system is considered well-funded. A Resolution recommending changes to the JRS funding policy and payroll growth assumption was adopted. Acting Commissioner Earls will review this recommendation in the Division of Retirement and Benefits.

Gabriel, Roeder, Smith & Company presented actuarial reports for the JRS and NGNMRS systems, and were accepted.

Resolutions and Legislative Recommendations

- Resolution 2025-21 (linked [here](#)) relates to “Recommending a One-Time Transfer of Certain HRA Forfeiture-Derived Resources to Support a 20-Year Retiree Medical Eligibility Option”; and
- Resolution 2025-22 (linked [here](#)) relates to “Recommending Legislative Action for Disability and Healthcare Coverage Improvements for Disabled Defined Contribution Members.”

The Retired Public Employees Association of Alaska publicly expressed its thanks to the ARM Board for creating and adopting these two resolutions at the end of its December meeting.

Future Meetings

- The next regularly scheduled full Board of Trustees meeting will be held March 17–19, 2026, in Juneau.

– Sandi Ryan



Resolution 2025-21



Resolution 2025-22

NEA-Alaska Board of Directors Meeting Wildbirch Hotel | January 13-14, 2026

This was the first time we held our meetings at the Wildbirch Hotel. It is an interesting, new establishment that should see a lot of tourists this coming summer.

Trena Richardson, Tim Parker, Kristi McEwen, and I were present as your representatives. As Trena is on the Executive Committee for our retired group, she attended the Budget and Audit Meeting held first.

The official meeting was called to order at 4:00 pm, beginning with the Native Lands Acknowledgment. Chad Swarthout spoke about his departure from the board and his new job. Christi Sitz and Mandy Swarthout were appointed to fill two seats on the state board.

A review of the August 31st Financial Audit by Max Mertz via Zoom followed. We passed the motion to approve the audit results.

Trena presented our retired report. Since our last meeting, we have been seeking to fill the TRS position on RHPAB. Three names have been submitted to Laura Capelle, NEA-Alaska President, who will then submit them to the governor: Faith Lee, Pamela Lloyd, and Trena Richardson. We have been gearing up for Policy Assembly, which will be our first meeting at Delegate Assembly (DA). Steve Click wants to introduce NBIs referencing AI. And we continue to fine-tune the requirements for membership in our retired organization as well as define parameters for traveling to conferences and the selection of attendees.

The other regions reported as well, with many challenges that never seem to change. Staffing issues persist. Many districts are bargaining, and morale is not always the best. At the time, ASD and AEA had reached an impasse with a strike possibility. Since our meeting, the new contract has been ratified!! There have been several successful listening tours leading to increased membership. Board members are trying to increase feedback from individual locals. Juneau has had more than its share of distressing situations, from flooding to avalanches.

Zac Mannix, Executive Director, is focusing on a successful DA before tackling other matters. The TNT group came together to try to solve complex political problems—how do we identify and train those we would like to see in government positions with common-sense messaging?

Matt Moser, Government Relations Director, spoke to us about the upcoming legislative session and the encouraging bipartisan coalitions with 907 Initiative and

Alaskans for Posterity (not to be confused with Americans for Prosperity). Alaska AFL-CIO will partner with us along with grassroots funding and dollars from other organizations. NEA-Alaska will contribute \$250,000 toward this bipartisan enterprise. The state board will have its next meeting in Juneau at the end of March to confer with legislators.

Laura has had a busy November and December. There are concerns regarding federal voucher programs that are being imposed and the dismantling of the US Department of Education. Standards of conduct model language are being considered.

We were involved for quite a while with the DA Committee Chair Training led by the Uniserve Directors. I served as chair of the Special Education Committee along with Travis Mills (Anchorage) and Laura Mulgrew (Juneau). Jessica Minguez, our extraordinary staff liaison, was the Uniserve director for our group. (The Special Education Committee started with just one prefiled NBI. However, by the time our work was done at DA, we had dealt with over twenty NBIs!!)

We approved the appointment of Susan Stitham and Susan Ritter for one-year terms and Josh Gerard for a two-year term to the Election Violation Policy Committee. We also approved the PTPC nomination list of six names for consideration. The Board did some wordsmithing on the NEA-Alaska Vision Statement—the newly revised version will go before DA for a vote.

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

Help Us Find You!

Please make sure we have your current

- mailing address
- phone number
- email address.

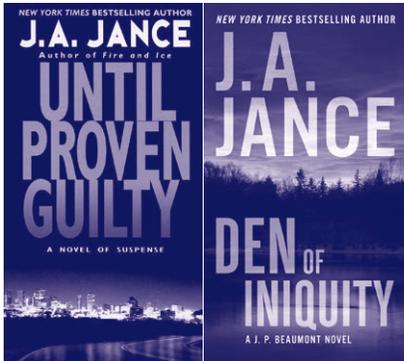
Contact Makana Bender at (907) 274-0536 to make any changes to your information.



Book Blast

JP Beaumont Series by J.A. Jance

J.A. Jance published the first J.P. Beaumont novel, *Until Proven Guilty*, in 1985. The most recent *Den of Iniquity* was



published in 2024, and it is the 26th book in this series. The mystery style of all the books is like modern police procedurals and suspense thrillers. The author solidly depicts the changes in society from the beginnings of cell phones through COVID to 2024 Seattle/

Bellingham. The main character's growth as a detective and a human is through the lens of ~40 actual years.

The author describes the backgrounds of Seattle and the Northwest with the clarity of a painting. In the series, the author develops protagonist Beaumont, a Seattle homicide detective, as a likeably flawed but relatively principled human. He is a typical man of the 80s, complete with an ex-wife, a series of less-than-simple relationships, and a complicated drinking problem, which do not detract from his brilliance and drive as a homicide detective. Readers can depend on Beaumont being a basically good human throughout the series. He has excellent taste in friends and colleagues, who assist in forcing his development from a bit superficial and stereotypic to more introspective and thoughtful by 2024, surprising even himself.

If you love the Northwest, whodunits, and classic detectives with a bit of Renaissance Man thrown in, then J.A. Jance's J.P. Beaumont series is for you.

Note: The author also pens the Sheriff Joanna Brady series set in Bisbee, Arizona, and the Ali Reynolds series set in Sedona, Arizona. Each protagonist is compelling in their own way.

– Kate Ortega

A Little Reminder

The deadline to apply for the 2026 Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) is March 31, 2026.

Happy to be Back in Action

After four years of not attending NEA-Alaska's Delegate Assembly (DA) and with America's Public Education under brutal attack, I decided it was time for me to return and help fight for the educators and children of Alaska and their rights as American Citizens.

A few of my takeaways from this year's DA are, first, I always love to watch my retired colleagues in action. Their leadership these days is in an advisory mode, which they handled so very well. Their knowledge, passion, and understanding of what needs to take place for the American education system to be at its best are stellar. Second, observing the retired teachers bring forth their skills in the recruiting of future retiree members and raising funding for the Jack Kinnaman scholarship fund was stunning. As a result, I offered to co-manage the Jack Kinnaman Scholarship fundraiser at the 2027 DA with Lori Mertes. The icing on the cake was when, heading to Fairbanks after the conclusion of DA, I got to see Gayle Harbo get honored at the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport for her 2 million miles of travel on Alaska Airlines.

–Mari Torgerson

Gayle Harbo Award

Barb George was presented with the Gayle Harbo Award during this year's 2026 Policy Assembly.

This award is presented to a member of the NEA-Alaska/Retired local who has provided distinguished and dedicated service to Retired and Active members. Barb dedicated countless hours to performing her vital role as Membership Chair for 14 years. We thank you, Barb; this is an honor well deserved.

– NEA-Alaska/Retired



NEA Legislative Meeting January 13, 2026

Kim Trinca, from NEA's Government Relations, was invited to speak to our committee. Stefanie is out on maternity leave until mid-May.

Kim reviewed the process of the Discharge Petition for the Health Care Extensions, which was signed by 218 or 435 members of Congress, which was enough signatures to push a vote. Seventeen Republicans voted in favor – none from Alaska.

The Appropriations Committee has twelve bills from the subcommittees to pass before the deadline on January 30th.

- They are combining bills, minibus spending bills, to move them through quickly. So far, three bills have passed. Commerce, Justice, and Science; Energy and Water Development; and Interior and Environment.
- The package this week is Labor, Health and Social Security, and Education. There is a \$12M difference between the House and Senate bills.
- The next was to be Finance, State and Foreign and Homeland. Because of the murder of Renee Good in Minnesota, Democrats are very upset and concerned. They do not want to rubber-stamp money to Homeland without language of the rule of law, citizen

protections, etc. Homeland appropriation is being separated from this minibus. Senator Murphy, CT, is developing language.

NEA is working on language to prohibit education offices from moving into other departments. It is an uphill battle.

We are also working on language to resume collective bargaining rights.

NEA also worked on restoring the funding that the DOE blocked earlier in the year.

We were told there is a Social Security tax deduction for those 65 and older for the 2025 tax year, up to \$12K for married and \$6K for singles.

There is a new pilot program called WISeR—Wasteful and Inappropriate Service Reduction Model. It is to protect American taxpayers by leveraging enhanced technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML), along with human clinical review, to ensure timely and appropriate Medicare payment for select items and services. It will run for 5 years across 6 states: NJ, OH, OK, TX, AZ, and WA.

Respectfully submitted

– Pamela Lloyd

Working in Retirement is Fulfilling

When I retired in 2023, I wasn't planning on working with children again. However, you should never say never. I was approached by the director of the Fairbanks Children's Museum the minute I retired. At the time I was not interested, as I had worked for over 35 years in education and needed a break from the day-to-day hustle of working and also had some health issues to deal with. However, two years later, I actually wrote to her and asked if she needed some help at the museum. I interviewed the next day and went to work a week later. I just celebrated my first anniversary at the best retirement job ever. I get to play, teach, have fun, and plan activities with an awesome staff. The children's museum is not



"Lori on the bottom left, with all of her co-workers."

just a place to come play but also to learn new things, let children explore new activities, and learn new information. We plan camps, art activities, and special occasions such as Valentine's Day, the New Year's Eve Ball Drop, and exciting days like that for families. My colleagues are like family, and we all help each other with every aspect of the museum. If I have a question, I ask, and I am learning new things too. I run Sensory Mondays for three hours two times a month. Children who can't handle the stress or loud activities of daily museum life can come to Sensory Mondays, and we keep things quieter and lights down low. I still get to interact with children and parents. I love my job.

– Lori Mertes – (FEA) Retired Special Education Teacher

Where in the World?

Wow! Steve Click's location in the previous "Where in the World" article, published in the Fall 2025 issue of the newsletter, sparked the interest of many members. We had quite a lot of members send in their guesses as to Steve's whereabouts. Steve was in the North Terminal at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport in Seattle, WA, by the "Blackleaf" standing horse sculpture. Many correct guesses included the right airport and terminal, but only one also included the "Blackleaf" sculpture behind Steve. SOOO, drumroll, the winner is Nancy Hummel of Fairbanks, Alaska.

Let's have some fun!

Let's see who can guess the location of our NEA-Alaska/Retired Vice President, Roxanne Abajian, by sending an email to me, Annie Baker, at annie_b@mac.com, with your guess. The deadline for submitting your guess is April 30th, 2026. Please mention "Where in the World" in the subject line and include your home address. Correct guesses will be entered into a drawing, and the winner will receive a \$25 Visa card mailed directly to them.

** Our NEA-Alaska/Retired board members, NEA-Alaska/Retired committee members, and NEA-Alaska Board members are not eligible to make a guess.*

The winner will be revealed in our next newsletter.

– Annie Baker



Communications

You should have received an email blast from Joe Boyle, our NEA-Alaska/Retired president, encouraging our retired members to volunteer to read to students/children during "Read Across America" week, from March 2-6, 2026. Here is an "Introduction Letter" for you to use if you choose. If you decide to volunteer, please email me, Annie Baker, at annie_b@mac.com. You can also send a story with pictures about your experience if you'd like, or you can just send pictures that we can use on our [website](#), [Facebook](#) page, and in our next newsletter.

NEA-Retired recognizes outstanding members and affiliates through several key awards.

- NEA-Retired Distinguished Service Award—deadline for submission is April 15, 2026.
- Membership Growth Award—deadline for submission is April 15, 2026.
- Tom Wellman Spirit of Membership Award—deadline for submission is April 15, 2026.

Communications Awards:

- Local, Regional, State Retired Print Newsletter—deadline for submission is May 1, 2026
- Local/State Retired E-Newsletter – deadline for submission is May 1, 2026
- Local/State Retired Website—deadline for submission is May 1, 2026.

You can read more about the NEA-Retired Awards and access the submission forms [here](#).

An *Ad Hoc Committee* has been established by the NEA-Retired Communications Committee to organize a seminar on "Creating a Newsletter". I am pleased to be a member of this committee.

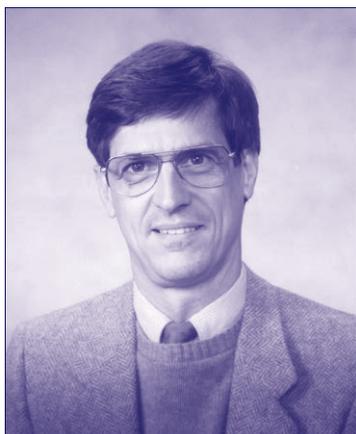
– Respectfully, Annie Baker



Introduction Letter



NEA-Retired Awards



Don Oberg

In May of 2025, we lost another of our formidable NEA-Alaska leaders.

Don Oberg moved to Alaska in the fall of 1964 with a plan to teach for a few years as Alaska recovered from the 1964 earthquake. He realized quickly that Alaska was destined to be his

permanent home. Conditions in rural Alaska in those days were challenging (no running water, using beach coal for heat). After experiencing the roughness of rural life, Don and his wife, Jackie, made their home in Kenai, AK, to raise their two boys.

Don taught sciences at Kenai Central High School for the remainder of his teaching career. Don was a talented, caring teacher who strived to reach every student, never giving up on anyone. He also coached swimming, diving, basketball, track, and cross country. He was thrilled to have coached both of his sons in swimming.

Don was active in the Kenai Peninsula Education Association as well as in NEA-Alaska and later was active

in NEA-Alaska/Retired. Don served as President of NEA-Alaska in 1981-82 and 1989-1992. He was named to the NEA-Alaska Hall of Fame in 2012. When Don retired from teaching, he worked for the National Education Association in Missouri for two years and then returned to Alaska, where he worked for NEA-Alaska for eight years in the Juneau office.

Don moved back to the Lower 48 and enjoyed spending time with his granddaughters.

When Don was president, he wrote an article; in 2021, the article was reprinted in an NEA-Alaska/Retired Newsletter as a “Blast from the Past.” The article is as appropriate today as it was when he wrote it during his presidency and when it was reprinted in 2021. Don wrote about the need to continue to press for adequate funding, promote quality and equality in our schools, and ensure true equity at the bargaining table.

Don was unable to attend the past few Delegate Assemblies, as his health prohibited his attendance. Retirees who knew Don often recount some amazing and funny stories from his time in NEA-Alaska. We will continue to miss him, his smile, and how easy it was for him to laugh at himself. Thanks, Don, for all you did for education in Alaska.

– Trena Richardson on behalf of NEA-Alaska/Retired

In Memoriam

Remembering those we have lost!

Reported at DA 2026

NEA-Alaska/Retired

Mary Castle – KEA • Jerry Castle – KEA • Anna M Davis – AEA • Donna Lee Dyrdaahl – KEA

Patricia Finegan – KEA • Yvonne Folan – AEA • Stephanie Gardner – AEA • Arnold Geiger – AEA

Marcia Kenoyer – KEA • Alexander Monterrosa – AEA • Sandy O’Neal – KEA • Don Oberg Past NEA-Alaska President

Liane Ryan – MSEA • Judy Salo – Past NEA-Alaska President • Carrole Sharp Sjostrand – KEA

Carol Stanton – KEA • Larry Tillotson – KEA

NEA-Alaska Active

Ron Arnold – ESSA • Suzanne Heckman – Lower Yukon ESPA • Jenna Standifer – KPESA

Brita Steinberger – JEA • Susan Sutherland – MSEA • Abigail Tiedemann – AEA

Members Not Reported Earlier

John D’Armand – JEA Retired 2022 • Verna Henkel – FEA Retired 2024 • Judy Thompson – AEA Retired 2025

"Almost Hamburger Helper" Mix in a Jar



Ingredients:

- 2 cups nonfat dry milk
- 1 cup cornstarch
- 1/4 cup beef bouillon powder
- 2 tbsp onion flakes
- 1 tsp dried basil
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 2 tbsp dried parsley
- 1 tbsp garlic powder
- Mix ingredients and store in an airtight jar.

Recipes to use with mix:

Quick Lasagna:

- 1 lb. ground beef, browned and drained
- 1/2 cup mix
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 cups water
- 16 oz tomato sauce
- 3 cups lasagna noodles, uncooked, broken in bits
- 1/4 c parmesan cheese
- 2 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded

Combine all except mozzarella in large skillet. Bring to a boil, let simmer for 15 minutes or until noodles are cooked. Top with mozzarella. Turn off heat and let cheese melt.

Stroganoff:

- 1 lb. ground beef, browned and drained
- 2 cups water.
- 1/2 cup mix
- 2 cups uncooked egg noodles
- 1/2 cup sour cream

Combine all except sour cream. Simmer 20 minutes or until noodles are tender. Stir in sour cream and serve.

– *Melody Dalbec, Pre-Retired (ESSA)*

Making Purchases with Your Phone

Using your phone to pay (via Apple Pay, Google Pay, Samsung Pay) is considered very safe, often more secure than using physical credit/debit cards. These apps use tokenization to create unique, encrypted, one-time codes for each transaction, meaning your actual card number is never shared with merchants.

Why Mobile Payments Are Secure:

- **Tokenization:** Your real card details are replaced by a temporary, encrypted "token".
- **Authentication:** Payments require biometric verification (Face ID, fingerprint) or a PIN.
- **No Physical Card Needed:** This protects against card skimmers and, in some cases, provides a cleaner, hands-off experience.
- **Proximity Requirement:** NFC technology requires you to hold your device within a few inches of the reader, making it difficult for hackers to intercept data.

– *Annie Baker*



Retirees' Tips, Tricks & Tidbits

Two Million Miles

Upon reaching the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport's departure gate for Fairbanks, Alaska, on January 18, 2026, Gayle Harbo was informed that she had achieved the milestone of Two Million Miles. Gayle now has an Alaska Airlines "Platinum Lifetime" status.



left to right:
*Mari Torgerson, Nancy Hummel, Lisa Harbo,
Gayle Harbo and Lori Mertes.*

NEA-Alaska Priority 1 Legislative Items

At the recent Delegate Assembly, regional representatives from around Alaska convened to consider New Business Items (NBIs) and Resolutions to set our work and further establish our values. Our NEA-Alaska/Retired members in attendance as delegates were active in constructing, debating, and approving a significant number of NBIs and resolutions. Among this group of 2026 NBIs, we have several that eventually were selected to be “Priority One” initiatives. One way to look at Priority 1 NBIs is that they are priorities that we want to try to mention in every conversation we have with lawmakers. This year, the Legislative Review Committee set the following 5 priorities as Priority 1 Legislative NBIs, and this slate was approved by the entire delegate assembly. These include:

NEA-Alaska Priority 1 Legislative NBIs

*26-27 Pensions for Public Service:

NEA-Alaska shall lobby for legislation that reestablishes a defined benefit retirement plan option for all Alaska public employees.

*26-28 Adjusted Base Funding for Public Education:

NEA-Alaska shall lobby for legislation that establishes inflation-proofing (Adjusted Base Funding) for public education as needed to maintain services for public education.

*26-60 Support for HB 12: “An Act Relating to Free Breakfast and Lunch in Public Schools”:

NEA-Alaska shall redouble its efforts to support HB12 at every level during the second session of the 34th Alaska State Legislature.

*26-46 Lobby for SB 198, a Bill to Reduce the Years of Services Needed to Access Medical Benefits for TRS III and PRS Public Employees:

NEA-Alaska shall lobby for the passage of SB 198. SB 198 would put into effect two resolutions from the Alaska Retirement Management Board: 2025-1 and 2025-2. This bill would reduce by 5 years the number of years of service required to access the money in an employee’s Health Reimbursement Arrangement account and the state’s subsidized supplemental health insurance. *SB 198 will not cost the State of Alaska any additional money.

*26-76 Support for the Alaska Retirement Management Board (ARMB) Resolutions to Strengthen the Defined Contribution Retirement System:

NEA-Alaska shall support Alaska Retirement Management Board Resolutions 2025-01, 2025-21, and 2025-22. NEA-Alaska strongly encourages the Alaska Legislature to enact the statutory amendments recommended in these

resolutions during the 2026 legislative session and to convey this stance to the Legislature, Governor’s Office, and appropriate committees.

– Howard Maxwell

Election News

You Need to Know

NEA-Alaska Election Results

Laura Capelle *NEA-Alaska President*

Michaela Hernandez.....*NEA-Alaska Vice President*

NEA-Alaska/Retired Election Results

Pamela Lloyd.....*NEA-Alaska/Retired President*

Roxanne Abajian....*NEA-Alaska/Retired Vice-President*

Barbara Stek*NEA-Alaska/Retired Secretary*

Gayle Harbo*NEA-Alaska/Retired Treasurer*

Annie Baker & Sandi Ryan
NEA-Alaska/Retired Directors-at-large

Tim Parker & Barbara Stek
NEA-Alaska Region R Director (2-year terms each)

Dianne Shibe
NEA-Alaska Region R Director (1-year term)

Steve Click and Howard Maxwell
Representative Assembly 2026

The NEA-Alaska/Retired Board thanks you for taking the time to vote!



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email: info@neaalaska.org

**“Be the change you wish to see in the world.”
– Mahatma Gandhi**

Tax Time is Upon Us

Enhanced Deduction for Seniors:

Taxpayers who are age 65 or older may be eligible for the enhanced deduction for seniors. This deduction is in addition to the higher standard deduction for taxpayers age 65 or older. Read about it [here](#).



Enchanted Deduction
for Seniors



Editor: Annie Baker

This newsletter is the official publication of NEA-Alaska/Retired, printed four 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, with “Newsletter” in the subject line, to Annie Baker: annie_b@mac.com

Find us on Facebook and online

NEA-Alaska Retired website: www.neaalaskaretired.com

Calendar of Events

March 2026

- 1-3 NEA-Retired Conference – Chandler, AZ
- 2-6 Read Across America – Nationwide
- 30-31 NEA-Alaska Board Meeting – Juneau

April 2026

- 15 Deadline for NEA-Retired Membership Awards nominations”
- 15 Jack Kinnaman Scholarship application closes
- 15 Deadline for NEA-Retired Distinguished Service Award nominations
- 30 Deadline for submissions for “Where in the World” article

May 2026

- 1 Resolutions filing deadline for NEA-Retired seats on the NEA Resolutions Committee
- 1 Deadline for NEA-Retired Communication Awards nominations

June 2026

- 4 NEA-Alaska/Retired Board Meeting (Zoom)
- 30-1 NEA-Retired Annual Meeting – Denver, CO

July 2026

- 3-7 NEA Representative Assembly (RA) – Denver, CO