NEA-Alaska/Retired

Fall 2026 • Volume XLI • No. 1

Retired Educators Healthcare Updates



Dental-Vision-Audio (DVA) Open Enrollment for the AlaskaCare Health Plan for 2027 starts November 4 and closes at 5 p.m. Alaska Time on November 25, 2026. Every November, retirees are invited to revisit their Dental/Vision/Audio Plan. There are two plans offered by the State. The Standard Plan and the Legacy Plan. **If you do not participate, you will be kept in your current plan.**

Be alert to emails and letters from the Alaska Division of Retirement and Benefits. They will inform you of any changes being made to either plan. If you wish to change from one plan to the other, this will be your opportunity.

I hope this is helpful. I am not an expert. NEA-AK/Retired cannot offer advice. Contact the Alaska Division of Retirement and Benefits if you have specific questions about you and your needs.



- **Toll-Free (outside Juneau):** (800) 821-2251
- **Local / Juneau Office:** (907) 465-4460
- **TDD / Hearing Impaired:** (907) 465-2805
- **Fax:** (907) 465-3086
- **Email:** doa.drb.mscc@alaska.gov

The RHPAB (Retiree Health Plan Advisory Board) is recommending a change to Alaska Care's Health Plan: Allowing Access to Licensed Massage Therapists (Retiree Plan).

Currently, members have access to massage therapy as a benefit available under the Rehabilitative Care provisions. However, these services must be billed under a provider recognized by the plan, which limits retiree access to medically necessary massage to services provided or billed by physical therapists, occupational therapists, chiropractors, and other recognized providers.

- The State is considering recognizing Licensed Massage Therapists (LMTs) as an eligible provider type to allow additional access under the Retiree Plan. By recognizing LMTs as eligible providers, retirees and their dependents would have additional access to providers. This change would bring alignment with the Employee Plan, which already recognizes LMTs as eligible providers.
- The RHPAB will meet again on October 29, 2026. There may be additional information available at that time.

Happy Fall,

– Trena Richardson

Health Benefit Contact Information

Medical Benefits: Aetna
Member Services: (855) 784-8646

Dental Benefits: Moda/Delta Dental
Member Services: (855) 718-1768

Long-Term Care Benefits: Wellcove Services, Inc.
Member Services: (888) 287-7116

Standard Plan Vision Benefits: Vision Service Plan (VSP)
Member Services: (800) 877-7195

Lantern
Member Services: (855) 715-1680

Pharmacy Benefits: Optum Rx
Member Services: (855) 409-6999

Teladoc Health
Member Services: (855) 835-2362

Hinge Health
Member Services: (855) 902-2777

In This Issue

Retired Educators Healthcare Updates 1
Health Benefit Contact Information 1
President's Corner 2
Autumn Fires 3
Another Legacy NEA-Alaska Leader Lost . . 4
Our State Board Meeting 5
Don't Get Caught Hibernating 5
Retired Annual Meeting (RAM) - 2026. 6
Retirees' Tips Tricks & Tidbits 6
Book Blast - Theo of Golden 7
Election News - You Need to Know 7
Where in the World 8
Educators Rising Alaska 8
Attendance at Events Funded by NEA-Alaska/Retired 9
Alaska Retirement Management Board . . . 10
Required Minimum Distributions 11
Quick and Easy Chili 11
Calendar of Events 12

NEA-Alaska/Retired Board

President
Pamela Lloyd (2028)
30238 White Spruce Ave • Sterling, AK 99672
907-242-6007
pamela.lloyd5@gmail.com

Vice President
Roxanne Abajian (2028)
PO Box 8996 • Ketchikan, AK 99901
907-617-8511
roxanne.abajian@gmail.com

Secretary
Barbara Stek (2028)
6101 Eastwood Ct. • Anchorage, AK 99504
907-338-2288
bwstekak@yahoo.com

Treasurer
Gayle Harbo (2028)
PO Box 10201 • Fairbanks, AK 99710
907-750-2296
sjharbo@yahoo.com

Directors-at-Large
Tim Parker (2027)
30 Steelhead Rd • Fairbanks, AK 99709
907-347-6649
tparkerak@gmail.com

Annie Baker (2028)
2519 Aster Drive • North Pole, AK 99705
907-978-8259
annie_b@mac.com

Sandi Ryan (2028)
2391 Shanks Mare Rd • Fairbanks, AK 99709
907-458-8526
sandisuzie@gmail.com

Region R Directors
NEA-Alaska Board

Trena Richardson (2027)
PO BOX 2278 • Soldotna, AK 99669
907-252-2881
aktrena@gmail.com

Dianne Shibe (2027)
5874 E Fireweed Dr • Wasilla, AK 99654
907-521-4685
dianneak@mtaonline.net

Tim Parker (2028)
30 Steelhead Rd • Fairbanks, AK 99709
907-347-6649
tparkerak@gmail.com

Barbara Stek (2028)
6101 Eastwood Ct. • Anchorage, AK 99504
907-338-2288
bwstekak@yahoo.com

President's Corner



Thank you, everyone, for your confidence in electing me President of NEA-Alaska/Retired.

NEA-Retired Conference

The year has been quite a whirlwind, beginning with the NEA-Retired Conference in March 2026, in Phoenix. The conference began with the Presidents' Meeting, where I was able to get acquainted with other state presidents. The initial conversation focused on the reasons behind the NEA-Retired Conference's separation from the Education Summit, and the poor communication regarding the dates and location.

One of last year's action items was to build a data bank to improve membership totals. We are still frustrated because we're unable to determine which individuals have retired, resigned, or transferred to another school or district. It's our understanding that this cannot be done due to privacy laws. Leadership will continue to look at this issue to find other solutions.

Continuous membership is a serious topic for many states. In Alaska, we continue to have pre-retired status to seamlessly transfer and continue benefits when moving from active to retired.

Aspiring Educators and Retired Partnerships are a priority for investing in our future local and state associations. The Jack Kinnaman Scholarship is a way to provide scholarships to aspiring educators. Alaska will again have an auction table to raise money for these scholarships at the 2027 Delegate Assembly; more information to follow.

Other workshops I attended included engaging membership, recognizing implicit bias, and writing grants for organizing and reviewing Robert's Rules of Order.

Please consider attending this conference. Stay tuned for instructions on how to attend.

NEA-Alaska/Retired Retreat and Board Meeting

On October 5th and 6th, 2026, your NEA-Alaska/Retired Board, several committee chairs, and committee members completed a retreat and a business



Left to right: Jessica Minguez, Tim Parker, Sheryl Wittig, Gayle Harbo and Barbara Stek

meeting. Guest speakers included Zac Mannix, NEA-Alaska Executive Director, and Matt Moser, Government Relations and Community Outreach Director. Committees broke into groups and developed goals for the year, including improving communication by developing a new "Why Join NEA-Alaska Pre-Retired" presentation, increasing membership, and reporting legislative issues.

The next NEA-Alaska Delegate Assembly (DA) is January 14-16, 2027, with the NEA-Alaska/Retired Policy Assembly being held on January 14th. DA will be held at the Captain Cook Hotel in Anchorage. DA, our annual meeting, is a gathering of over 300 NEA-Alaska members who convene to address student and educator needs, as well as to establish our legislative priorities and budget.

The following positions will term out in 2027. Nominations will close at the end of the day on January 16, 2027, with electronic voting later in the month. New terms will begin July 5, 2027, after Representative Assembly (RA) is adjourned.

- Two NEA-Alaska State Board of Directors positions
- One NEA-Alaska/Retired Director-at-Large
- Two Representative Delegates (RA) for Region R
- Two PACE seats for Region R

Our NEA-Alaska President Laura Capelle and the NEA-Alaska Board of Directors have initiated and passed three new policies.

- A Code of Conduct
- Whistleblower Policy
- A Conflict of Interest.

These policies can be found HERE.

Lastly, the NEA-Retired Conference will be held March 31 – April 2, 2027, in New Orleans, Louisiana. Your retired board allocated funding for four members in addition to the president and membership chair. Details to follow.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks go to the NEA-Alaska/Retired Board of Directors for making the leadership transition from Joseph Boyle so smooth and welcoming. I would also like to thank our NEA-Alaska staff liaison, Jessica Minguez, for all her assistance.

In Solidarity

– Pamela Lloyd



Front row left to right: Sheryl Wittig, Lori Mertes, Cindy Lou Aillaud, Gayle Harbo… Back row left to right: Pamela Lloyd, Tim Parker, Joseph Boyle, Dianne Shibe, Trena Richardson, Annie Baker, Barbara Stek



Left to right: Annie Baker, Lori Mertes, Cindy Lou Aillaud, Dianne Shibe and Joe Boyle

Autumn Fires

By Robert Louis Stevenson

In the other gardens
And all up the vale,
From the autumn bonfires
See the smoke trail!

Pleasant summer over
And all the summer flowers,
The red fire blazes,
The grey smoke towers.

Sing a song of seasons!
Something bright in all!
Flowers in the summer,
Fires in the fall!



– Roxanne Abajian

Another Legacy NEA-Alaska Leader Lost

NEA-Alaska lost another of our legacy leaders when Bonnie Barber died on August 8, 2026. After graduating with an English degree from Arizona State, Bonnie moved with her new husband, Will, to Michigan, then Australia, and finally, with their two daughters, Catey and Sarah, in the late '70s to Fairbanks, where Will taught at UAF and Bonnie was a counselor, first at North Pole High School and then Tanana Middle School.



Bonnie Barber

A passionate advocate for educator rights and political action for public schools and all Alaska students, Bonnie became active in FEA immediately. She liked to tell how when she tried to join the Association during her first days at North Pole, she couldn't find a building rep to sign her up, so she became one. She eventually served as president of FEA, Region V Director, and as a delegate to countless DA's and Rep Assemblies. Having had the good fortune to be Bonnie's frequent roommate at these meetings, I can attest to her trademark intellectual curiosity and grounded seriousness, although she could be distracted by good tennis on TV. An excellent counselor, Bonnie was always focused on being sure everyone was included in whatever good time was on the agenda.

Bonnie personified professional integrity and brought a serious commitment to a thorough understanding of the facts and their context to every group and task she took on. These qualities served Alaska well both when the governor appointed her to the Alaska Professional Teaching Practices Commission and later, following her retirement in 1999 from the Fairbanks school district, when she administered the PTPC for a number of years as a superb Executive Director.

After she and Will retired (again) in 2008, they moved to Reno, Nevada, to be near her daughters and grandchildren, where Bonnie continued to be an active member of our NEA-Alaska/Retired local while being deeply involved in Reno's AAUW and Democratic Party.

Bonnie modeled a principled commitment to public education and to our professional union, and she will be greatly missed as a leader, a mentor, and particularly, as a friend.

As a teacher, Bonnie certainly exemplified Christa McAuliffe's mantra: "I touch the future. I teach."

Please see below for a tribute from Tim Doebler, one of Bonnie's students from 1981:

Bonnie Barber 1941-2026

"How powerfully huge an impact a high school counselor can make in a young person's life. I dropped out of high school and ran away from home in 10th grade. Living on the streets in Fairbanks, Alaska was not a viable option … especially in the winter. So I got myself into foster care. But, I needed a mentor to figure out how to "catch up" and navigate my junior/senior year of high school. Enter Bonnie Barber – mentor, positive parental figure, and cheerleader. She knew I was lost and struggling … she helped me find my way. She saw potential in me. She formulated an academic success plan for me and then encouraged me all along the way. That plan stretched beyond high school graduation and ultimately landed me in college and then a career. I graduated high school in 1981 and kept in touch with her the rest of her life. Rest in peace Bonnie. I will be forever grateful for your presence and influence in my life. To Bonnie's family and to the multitude of students she looked out for and guided … I say what a gift she was and how fortunate we all are to have had this matriarch in our lives."

– Susan Stitham

Help Us Find You!

Please make sure we have your current mailing address, phone number, and email address. Contact Lena Gonzales at (907) 274-0536 to make any changes to your information.



Our State Board Meeting - September 25-26, 2026
(creative title unavailable – sorry!)

Your four representatives on the board were present—Trena Richardson, Tim Parker, Dianne Shibe, and Barbara Stek. Our meeting began with a very special native lands acknowledgement given by Michaela Hernandez.

We had a great round of introductions where we were asked to give our favorite hype song! Later, Helen Pierce recorded them to be played at Delegate Assembly. What a wide range of genres!

Matt Moser spoke about the upcoming elections. Many of our supported candidates have been doing well thus far. On Saturday, we did door-to-door canvassing of AFL-CIO members in support of Denny Wells and our other PACE-recommended folks. It was a successful experience.

We then dove into the documents regarding the Board Code of Ethical Conduct, Fiduciary Duties, and Whistleblower Responsibilities.

Board members have rights and a fiduciary role. We need to be good stewards of the mission and resources of NEA-Alaska. A huge part of our Duty of Care is to attend and prepare for meetings and to act honestly and in good faith at all times. We need to act in the best interest of NEA-Alaska and support Board decisions. Remember that information in Executive Session is confidential. We must not engage in any harmful or offensive behavior or misuse NEA-Alaska resources. If there are violations regarding the Code of Ethics, a written complaint may be submitted to the Executive Director or the President.

The Whistleblower Policy protects the association and its members. The vice president is the whistleblower officer who receives the concerns. There is protection against retaliation. If you see something, say something.

SharePoint houses all of our governing documents. The Board of Directors is charged with managing the affairs of the association between Delegate Assemblies.

Sandi Ryan and Mike Williams have been reappointed to the ARM Board. Zac tells us that our foot is in the door for coursework in Alaska Studies—we hope to increase the numbers so more members are able to attend. We are planning to develop a program to let the public know what the impacts of larger class sizes have on education and educators. We are seeking a grant from NEA. We received $ from NEA for "vote no on 2" as well as for candidates Mary Peltola and Bill Hill.

Apparently, retirees turned out in high numbers for the recent NEA-Alaska name change survey. 155 people responded in total; however, it seems most respondents do not support a name change. A report will be given at the next Delegate Assembly (DA).

The ad hoc committee tasked with the NBI regarding the naming of buildings and rooms in our buildings has created policy for our vote. Basically, buildings owned in whole or part by NEA-Alaska shall retain that name. However, rooms in those buildings may be named for members who have contributed much to the organization with the agreement of the locals and the state board.

The Solidarity Summit will be held the weekend of October 16th. Friday night allows time for regions to gather with their respective members for discussion.

We had time to review NBIs as well as any pertinent resolutions belonging to our respective committees in preparation for our next DA.

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

Don't Get Caught Hibernating!



During the NEA-Alaska 2027 Delegate Assembly (DA), we'll encourage active NEA-Alaska delegates to get their paws on a pre-retired membership form and join. "Bears" will be the DA theme. Don't hibernate this winter; pick up or create bear items to display at the membership table for new pre-retired members to choose as a welcome gift. You can bring your items to the NEA-Alaska/Retired Policy Assembly meeting on Thursday, January 14, 2027. I can "BEARLY" wait to see what arrives. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Tell all of your active members who haven't joined Pre-Retired ranks to "Join Pre-Retired Now".

If you or someone you know has recently retired, please call NEA-Alaska at (907) 274-0536 to inform them of the change.

– Cindy Lou Aillaud

Retired Annual Meeting (RAM) - 2026

The 2026 Retired Annual Meeting (RAM) was held in Denver, Colorado, from June 29th to July 1st. Your NEA-Alaska/Retired Delegates were Howard Maxwell and Steve Click. NEA-Alaska/Retired President Pam Lloyd attended as a guest. The meeting opened with a moving video of the 250-year history of the US. There were 323 registered delegates with 316 in attendance. We sang the Star-Spangled Banner and had a remembrance for veterans as well as the Land Acknowledgement of the indigenous peoples of the Denver area. We reviewed the standards of conduct and adopted the standing rules. Anita Gibson, NEA-Retired President, welcomed delegates to the meeting and focused on Strengthening the Foundation of NEA-Retired by Protecting our Democracy, by Recognizing our Impact, Organizing for Power, and being Member-Driven and Leader-Focused. NEA-Retired is also invested in and is partnering with the Aspiring Educators Program for our future.

There were several guest speakers: Becky Pringle spoke to thank the retired members for their collective expertise and continued activism and our work in repealing WEP/GPO, stating we are the heart of the NEA mission. President Pringle called on NEA-Retired to continue with activism, to vote, work the polls, knock on doors, and reach out to people. Educate, Communicate, Organize, Mobilize, Litigate, Legislate and Elect. Becky's farewell keynote was featured in an article in the NEA Today Newsletter. You can listen to Becky's farewell keynote HERE. Princess Moss praised the NEA-Retired members for their relationship-building, accountability, and organizing for power. She proposed a four-part charge for the movement. 1. Fuel the Movement—Contribute to PAC; 2. Make a plan to vote; 3. Promote the vote; and 4. Protect the vote. We must protect access. Noel Candelaria spoke briefly. Mary Kusler, Senior Director at the NEA Center for Advocacy, described the mayhem of Washington, DC, including the reflecting pool and the numerous times the House was shut down. What are we going to do?! NEA needs to fire up! In 2024, 90 million voters did NOT vote. She reviewed Princess' four-part change for the movement to engage. Minnesota built a strong community after George Floyd was murdered. They developed connections with churches, communities, cities, the Chamber of Commerce, etc. We are in a battleground this summer; we need to make phone calls and knock door to door. Protect the vote, partner with the League of Women Voters, recruit members to be poll workers, and tell our stories. Everything you do matters, no matter how small. You can watch and listen to many of Becky Pringle's speeches on YouTube to get inspired and motivated to fight our battle for public education.

We reviewed past NBI's from 2025 and the nine NBI's for 2026. Our Privacy Policy was recently updated on May 1st of 2025 and classifies member information as personally identifiable information and thus cannot be shared with NEA.

NEA-Retired is also invested in and is partnering with the Aspiring Educators Program for our future. The final Jack Kinnaman Scholarship fund for the year totaled $28,079.63. Your Delegate Assembly delegates in Alaska contributed the second-highest donation, given at $1825. The total for the PAC silent auction was $25,108.

Elections were held. Anita Gibson won her second term for NEA-Retired President. Our NEA-Alaska/Retired Steve Click won a seat on the Resolutions Committee; yeah, Steve! Steve is also part of two subcommittees of the Governance Committee: Racial and Social Justice and Member Benefits. See the NEA website for further election results.

Respectfully submitted,
– Pamela Lloyd and Steve Click

Retirees' Tips, Tricks & Tidbits

Did you know that using eggshells when you plant your tomatoes is an excellent way to introduce calcium into the soil? This also helps prevent blossom end rot. In the fall of the year before next year's planting season, this is what I do:

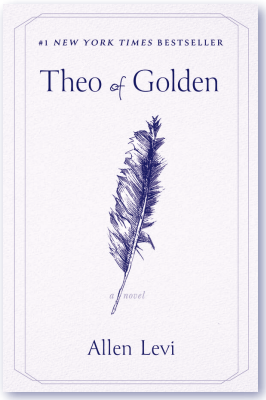
1. I wash my eggshells, then let them dry.
2. I put them into a gallon Ziploc bag
3. When my gallon bag is full, I bake them at 225° F for about 45 minutes.
4. I cool, crush, and store the baked shells in an airtight container.
5. When ready to plant my tomatoes, I grind the shells in a blender.
6. I toss a handful of blended shells into my planting hole, set a tomato seedling in the hole, water, cover with dirt, and water again.

Since I started this, I haven't had blossom rot. You can find many versions of doing this online.

– Annie Baker

Book Blast

Theo of Golden by Allen Levi"



Theo of Golden by Allen Levi is a gift of perception for us all. The fact the author self-published and self-promoted the book is a testament to "some things are meant to be." It moved by word of mouth onto the New York Time's best sellers list, where it has held space for the last 44 weeks.

The beauty of Theo's skills of "stillness and listening" draws us into his life and the lives of the characters he meets in Golden, a town nestled somewhere in the Southern United States. Theo's project in town takes on a life of its own, as he buys and bestows beautiful portraits done by the local artist, Asher, to each subject. Through his conversations with these residents and the artist, Theo reveals the value and beauty found in each life, acknowledging people often see themselves with too harsh a light. He makes the effort to surround them with his frame, focused on their beauty and inherent worth.

The world through Theo's eyes shows us the transience of every moment as a unique stand-alone experience that will never repeat itself. The ability to cherish life and embrace moments are real gifts. This book is not saccharin or goody-goody. It is made of genuine beauty, pain, and redemption. It embraces pain and unmet expectations with the same balance as joy, beauty, and love. From the memories of torn limbs and napalm in Vietnam to birth and innocence and creativity shared by the artist and musician, Theo illustrates them for us.

This book is a journey that leaves the reader's heart full. "For something to be good there must be love in it."

– *Kate Ortega*

Election News - You Need to Know

The following NEA-Alaska/Retired members will be representing you at the 2027 NEA-Alaska Delegate Assembly.

Cindy Lou Aillaud
Steve Click
Barb Geroge
Andy Holleman
Kate Ortega
Melodee Sonnenberg
Bob Williams
Whit Aillaud
Pat DeSmet
Beverly Goad
Stanley King
Rebecca Paul
Susan Stitham
Cheryl Williams
Joe Boyle
Teresa Duncan
Vicki Hewitt
Howard Maxwell
Christopher Provost
Mari Torgerson
Loretta Christie
Susan Dunham
Michael Husa
Lori Mertes
Tammy Smith
Kristina Tornqvist

Alternates in Order of Their Alternate Position:
Todd Hindman, Ernie Kirby, Wendy Demers, Tim Walters, Nancy Hummel, Faith Lee, Cid Blasé, David Horwath, Michelle Pennington, Sharon Penttila, Tom Klaameyer, Bonnie Lind, Cheryl Schey, Emerson Rempel, Chris Villano, Elizabeth Will, Greg Turner, Jeff Hebard, Marilyn Rosen, Pat Romans, Ruth E Knight, Teresa Huntley, Tom Richards

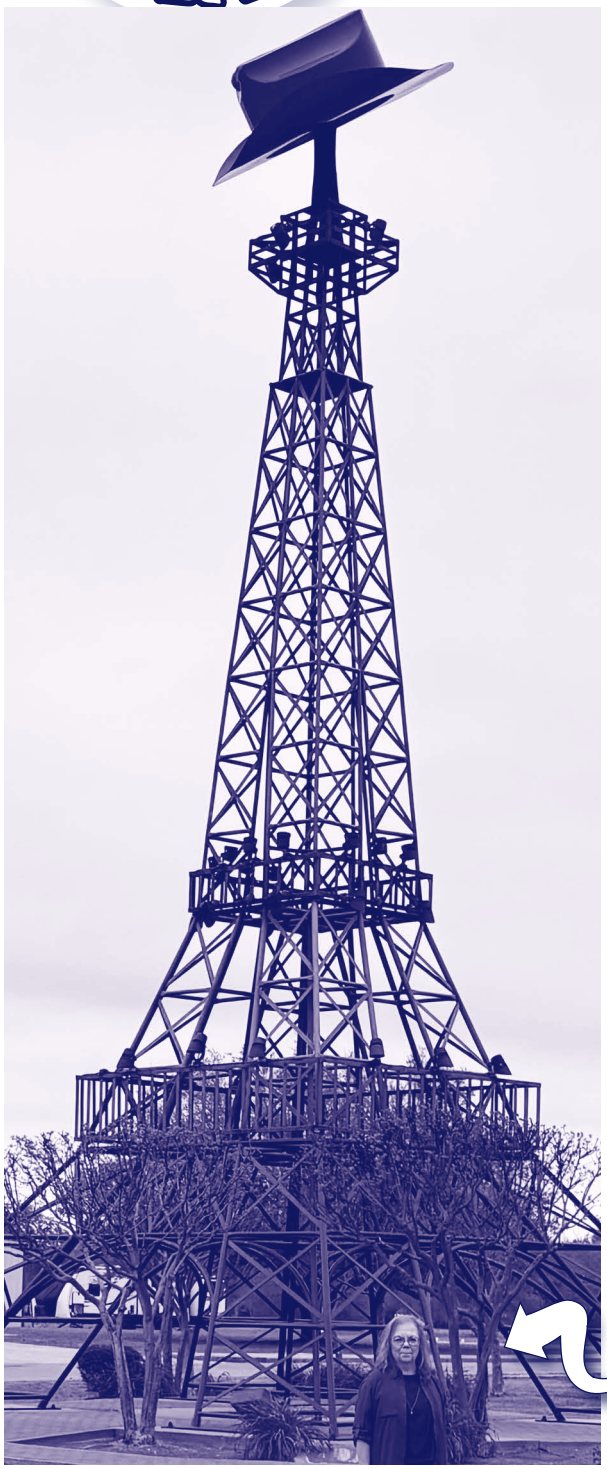
By virtue of their position on the NEA-Alaska/Retired Board:
Pamela Lloyd, Roxanne Abajian, Gayle Harbo, Annie Baker, and Sandi Ryan are retired delegates.

Tim Parker, Trena Richardson, Dianne Shibe, and Barbara Stek will join our retired delegation as NEA-Alaska Board of Directors state delegates at DA.



"Where in the World"

Wow, more and more members are sending in their guesses. Our readers sent in numerous correct guesses regarding Kate Ortega's location in our "Where in the World" article for the Spring/Summer 2026 newsletter. They were entered into a drawing. Our winning member is Christopher Provost, Kodiak, Alaska. Here is his guess: "Kate was standing in front of the artist Rudy Autio's sculpture of a grizzly bear that was installed near the classic University Hall in 1969 at the University of Montana campus in Missoula, Montana. The Main Hall (University Hall) is behind the sculpture, while Mount Sentinel is in the background."



OK, let's see if you can guess the location of Sandi Ryan (NEA-Alaska/Retired Director-at-Large) in this photo. Ready, Set, Go!

Send an email to me, Annie Baker, at annie_b@mac.com, with your guess. The deadline for submitting your guess is December 31st, 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



Educators Rising Alaska

RISE Alaska is looking for retired educators who would enjoy spending a little time with Alaska's future educators!

We're looking for a few additional volunteers to serve as judges at RISE Alaska student events this year. Our students are middle and high school students exploring teaching, leadership, and what it means to serve their schools and communities.

Judge commitment:

- Judge trainings: December or January or Asynchronous recording
- Pre-Judging: Feb 7-15, 2027 (on your own schedule)
- Judging: Feb 16-17, 2027 8:30-4:00pm
- Training and judging materials will be provided, and no previous competition-judging experience is required.

Judges don't need to be experts in education competitions. We provide the guidance, rubrics, and training you need; your experience and feedback as an educator is what makes your perspective valuable to our students.

It's a great opportunity to meet young people who are thinking seriously about education and to encourage the next generation of Alaska educators.

Interested in volunteering? Sign up HERE!

Questions? Email us at: uaf-edrisingak@alaska.edu.

(RISE Alaska is a statewide youth leadership and career development initiative connected to Educators Rising Alaska that inspires and prepares middle school, high school, and collegiate students to enter the teaching profession.)

Respectfully,

– Florence, Program Manager, Educators Rising Alaska
fscott8@alaska.edu

Attendance at Events Funded by NEA-Alaska/Retired

NEA-Alaska/Retired Policy #4

4. Attendance at events funded by NEA-Alaska/Retired

1. Qualifying events and conferences are listed in the NEA-Alaska/Retired budget. The amount for funding members to attend an event or conference will be determined in the approved NEA-Alaska/Retired budget. The number of participants will not exceed the number of members budgeted for that year, except as approved by the Retired Board of Directors.

2. Any NEA-Alaska/Retired member wishing to receive financial assistance to attend a retirement event or conference shall notify the president of NEA-Alaska/Retired, in writing, at least two months prior to the event or conference. Requests must include:

    a. Brief summary of member's involvement with NEA-Alaska/Retired;
    b. An explanation of how the member's attendance will benefit NEA-Alaska/Retired members;
    c. Information about past attendance at the event/conference or another retired event/conference, including number of times the member has been funded by NEA-Alaska/Retired to attend;
    d. Estimate of anticipated costs to include: registration fee, travel, number of days for lodging, and per diem.

3. A member may request financial assistance from NEA-Alaska/Retired to attend a retirement event or conference that is not allocated for in the Retired budget. The written request must include the required information in number 2 and must be submitted in writing, at least two months prior to the event or conference, providing sufficient time for the Retired Board to meet and review the request and if approved, for the member to secure travel and lodging within the costs listed in the request.

4. Participants will be approved by the NEA-Alaska/Retired president and confirmed by the Retired Board of Directors on the basis of the benefits for NEA-Alaska/Retired and considering the following criteria:

    a. Prior or current involvement with the NEA-Alaska/Retired local;
    b. Benefit to NEA-Alaska/Retired members resulting from the participation of a Retired member serving in either elected or appointed NEA-Alaska or NEA-Alaska/Retired leadership positions or on a relevant state board or commission;
    c. Opportunity for new leaders to gain experience and expertise in retirement issues;

5. Any member funded, partially or fully by NEA-Alaska/Retired, will submit a written report to the NEA-Alaska/Retired Board, and to the membership as requested.

6. NEA-RETIRED ANNUAL MEETING

    a. NEA-Alaska/Retired will reimburse expenses for the NEA-Alaska/Retired members, elected as state delegates to the NEA annual Representative Assembly (RA), to attend the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting (RAM), held prior to the RA.
    b. Expenses to be reimbursed are listed in the Retired budget and include lodging and per diem during the two-day meeting.
    c. If the NEA-Alaska Retired president is not an elected delegate to the RA, the NEA-Alaska/Retired will reimburse travel, lodging, and per diem expenses for the president to attend the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting

Submitted by Roxanne Abajian and Susan Stitham, 11/15/2025

Recommended Board approval by the Retired Policy Assembly, 1/16/2026

Approved by the Retired Board of Directors, 1/18/1026

*** Here is a handy form you can use if you'd like to apply for an event.**
https://neaalaskaretired.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/11/nea_alaska_retired_events_application_form_final-3.pdf

Alaska Retirement Management Board

September 2026 Meeting

The Alaska Retirement Management Board (ARMB) held its quarterly meetings September 14–16 at the Atwood Conference Center in Anchorage:

Committees met Monday, September 14, and the full Board of Trustees met Tuesday and Wednesday. Here is a plain-language look at what the Board did.

Two trustees return to the Board:
The Board welcomed back Trustees Sandi Ryan and Michael Williams. The Board's chair appointed Trustee Ryan to the Audit, Defined Contribution Plan, Actuarial and Operations Committees, and Trustee Williams to the Audit, Defined Contribution Plan and Actuarial Committees.

Their return follows a summer dispute over two vacant trustee seats reserved for members of the Public Employees' and Teachers' Retirement Systems. Five public retirees, along with the AFL-CIO and NEA-Alaska, had sued the State over the vacancies. In mid-August, Governor Dunleavy reappointed Ryan, an NEA nominee, and Williams, an AFL-CIO nominee, and the unions withdrew their lawsuit.

Fiscal Year 2028 contribution rates set:
Each September the Board sets contribution rates for the following fiscal year. This year it adopted a package of resolutions covering:

- The FY2028 PERS and TRS actuarially determined contribution rates attributable to employers (Resolutions 2026-06 and 2026-09).
- The Board adopted the FY2028 retiree major medical, occupational death, and disability rates for the PERS and TRS Defined Contribution Retirement plans (Resolutions 2026-07, 2026-08, 2026-10, and 2026-11).
- The Board adopted the FY2028 annual contribution amount for the National Guard and Naval Militia Retirement System (Resolution 2026-12).
- The resolutions post the exact percentages on the ARMB contribution rates page. The Board also adopted its FY2028 working budget, which is subject to approval and appropriation by the Office of Management and Budget and the Legislature.

Assets under management
The Board oversees about $47.7 billion across the state's retirement plans. These are the most recent plan-by-plan totals, as of March 31, 2026, reported at the Board's June meeting. The PERS and TRS totals include their defined contribution accounts.

PERS (all plans)	$27.8 billion
PERS defined contribution retirement accounts (included above)	$3.4 billion
TRS (all plans)	$12.4 billion
TRS defined contribution retirement accounts (included above)	$1.3 billion
Judicial Retirement System	$328.9 million
National Guard and Naval Militia Retirement System	$46.8 million
Supplemental Annuity Plan	$5.8 billion
Deferred Compensation Plan	$1.3 billion
Total	**$47.7 billion**

Investment manager changes:
The Board makes routine decisions about the managers who invest the funds, and it took several of them in September:

- The Board removed Man Group from its watchlist.
- The Board added First Eagle to the watchlist because of a change in ownership.
- The Board added Legal & General to the watchlist for non-compliance with investment guidelines.
- The Board adopted Resolution 2026-14, which delegates specified signing and investment authorities.

Real assets: new real estate managers:
On Wednesday, the Board adopted Resolution 2026-13, the Real Assets Annual Investment Plan for Fiscal Year 2027. Real assets are real estate, infrastructure, farmland, and timber, and the Board targets 14 percent of the portfolio for them.

The consultant's report showed the real assets portfolio at about $5.0 billion on June 30, 2026, or 13.2 percent of the total fund. It returned 6.1 percent net over the past year, ahead of its 5.0 percent benchmark. Private infrastructure did especially well, returning 11.2 percent net against a 7.5 percent benchmark. At the same time, core real estate remained below its target weight, which the consultant tied to weak relative performance in recent periods.

To rebuild the core real estate holdings, the Board approved hiring Principal, AEW and TA Realty for open-end core real estate fund mandates, with initial contributions of $100 million each. The hires are subject to successful contract negotiations.

Defined contribution plans and distribution counseling:
The Defined Contribution Plan Committee's agenda included updates from Empower, the plans' recordkeeper, and from the Division of Retirement and Benefits. Empower's report in the meeting packet showed about $146.8 million leaving the state's defined contribution plans through rollovers and cash-outs in the second quarter of 2026. Roughly 58 percent of that went to IRAs at outside institutions, and about 36 percent was cashed out.

The Board has been reviewing how it counsels participants when they take money out of these plans. The September agenda included a Strategic Review and Action Committee discussion of distribution counseling, and the full Board's Wednesday agenda included an executive session to review distribution counseling calls.

Next meeting:
December's meeting will be virtual. December 1, all committees will meet, and the regular Board meeting will be on December 2-3.

– Sandi Ryan

Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs)

You cannot keep retirement funds in your account indefinitely. You generally have to start taking withdrawals from your IRA, SIMPLE IRA, SEP IRA, or retirement plan account when you reach age 73.

You're not required to take withdrawals from Roth IRAs, or from Designated Roth accounts in a 401(k) or 403(b) plan while the account owner is alive. However, beneficiaries of Roth IRAs or Designated Roth accounts are subject to the required minimum distribution rules.

Your RMD is the minimum amount you must withdraw from your account each year.

You can withdraw more than the minimum required amount.

Your withdrawals will be included in your taxable income except for any part that was taxed before (your basis) or that can be received tax-free (such as qualified distributions from designated Roth accounts).

Taken from the IRS Website:

https://www.irs.gov/retirement-plans/plan-participant-employee/retirement-topics-required-minimum-distributions-rmds

– Annie Baker

Quick *and* Easy Chili

Ingredients:

- 1 28 oz can crushed tomatoes in tomato puree
- ¾ of a 32 oz carton of beef broth
- 1 6 oz can tomato paste
- 2 tsp crushed red pepper
- 2 tbsp chili powder
- 1 tsp ground white pepper
- 1 tbsp dark brown sugar
- ¼ tsp cinnamon
- ¼ tsp ground mixed chili peppers
- 1 tbsp butter
- 1 1/3 pounds ground beef
- 1 tsp Garlic Salt
- 1 ½ celery stalks
- 1/3 cup finely chopped onions
- 3/4 – 1 can of dark red kidney beans

Optional toppings:

Chopped onions, your favorite grated cheese, crackers, or a dollop of sour cream.

Instructions:

In a medium (about 2-quarts) saucepan, add crushed tomatoes, tomato paste, kidney beans, chili powder, white pepper, brown sugar, cinnamon, and ground mixed chili peppers; bring to a simmer.

Sprinkle ground beef with garlic salt and cook until browned. Drain the fat and add it to the saucepan.

Sauté onions, celery, and crushed red peppers, then add to the saucepan.

Add beef broth to the saucepan and simmer on low heat, stirring occasionally, until flavors have had time to blend, about 30 minutes.

– Annie Baker



NEA Alaska RETIRED

4100 Spenard Road
Anchorage, AK 99517

www.neaalaska.org or
email: info@neaalaska.org

This Thanksgiving, we are deeply grateful for the power of our collective voice and the solidarity that unites us.

Calendar of Events

November 2026
- 17 NEA-Alaska Board Meeting via Zoom
- 26-27 NEA-Alaska Offices Closed

December 2026
- 1 Jack Kinnaman Scholarship application opens
- 31 Deadline for submitting guesses for "Where in the World"
- 24-31 NEA-Alaska Offices Closed

January 2027
- 1-3 NEA-Alaska Offices Closed
- **11-14 NIRS Consortium Annual Conference – Knoxville, TN**
- 12-13 NEA-Alaska Board Meeting
- 14 NEA-Alaska/Retired Policy Assembly
- 14 New DA Delegate Orientation
- 14-16 NEA-Alaska Delegate Assembly
- 17 NEA-Alaska/Retired Board Meeting

March 2027:
- 12-14 NEA Leadership Summit – Chicago, IL
- 19-21 NEA-ESP National Conference – Chicago, IL

March 31 - April 2: NEA-Retired Conference – New Orleans, LA

April 2027:
- 15 Deadline for Membership Awards application
- 15 Jack Kinnaman Scholarship application closes
- 15 Deadline for Communication Awards application
- 15 Deadline for Distinguished Service Award nominations

June 2027:
- 27-28 NEA-Retired Annual Meeting (RAM) – Indianapolis, IN
- June 30 – July 4: NEA Representative Assembly (RA) – Indianapolis, IN

Bolded dates require NEA-Alaska/Retired members to apply to the event 2 months in advance of the event. Check inside this issue of the newsletter for the policy on "Attendance at events funded by NEA-Alaska/Retired".

Editor: Annie Baker

This newsletter is the official publication of NEA-Alaska/Retired. 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