



# Alaskans Working For Alaska!

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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Point of Contact: Jim Duncan, Executive Director

### **LEGISLATURE ON THE PRECIPICE OF UNPRECEDENTED ASSAULT ON STATE EMPLOYEES**

The Legislative Majority is on the verge of violating state labor contracts affecting more than 15,000 working men and women—8,650 of whom are represented by ASEA and covered under a contract dating back to early 2013. The ASEA contract was negotiated in good faith with the previous Administration and its monetary terms were approved by previous legislatures.

The Legislature has the responsibility to honor all its contracts, both public and private. By eliminating funding for the ASEA contract from this year's Operating Budget, the Legislative Majority is breaking a bond with the people who deliver state services across Alaska.

ASEA accepted meager 1% increases that did not keep up with inflation in the first two years of the contract to arrive at an agreement that was acceptable to both sides. In the end the ASEA Contract provided for a reasonable 2.5% wage increase for the third year after bargaining on all issues, monetary and otherwise.

"The Union and the previous Administration negotiated the contract, and previous legislatures approved the monetary terms," said Jim Duncan, Executive Director of ASEA/AFSCME Local 52. "This Legislature's failure to fund the third year is unacceptable. The removal of funding interferes in and distorts a three-year labor agreement."

"ASEA has always worked on acceptable solutions when faced with dire fiscal projections. This November, when negotiations begin on the next contract, ASEA will come to the table with a bargaining team that understands and appreciates the tough times ahead," he said.

"Everything about how contract terms are being treated this year is unprecedented," said Duncan. "The Senate Finance Committee process was flawed. Dramatic cuts came on the last possible day for amendments to the Operating Budget, with no notice and no opportunity for public input. These cuts were rammed through so quickly that their impact to the State is not yet understood."

Some legislators have said that dodging labor contract obligations will save jobs. A reduction in workforce has already been submitted by the Governor in the Operating Budget and additional positions were trimmed before the budget was approved by the State House. These program cuts address the cost of labor while still honoring the contracts. The Legislature's obligation to fund the monetary terms of all active Executive Branch labor contracts is less than \$17 million in Unrestricted General Funds, a relatively small amount to honor their commitment.

"If the Legislature upholds these disingenuous and selective cuts for state workers, they are effectively saying some obligations are not worth honoring—and that's not the way we do business in Alaska," said Duncan. "A contract is a contract. The legislature needs to honor the commitments made. State employees have already made sacrifices and continue to honorably serve the needs of Alaskans every day."

Restore the contracts. Respect the bargain. It's the Alaska way. ASEA/AFSCME Local 52 represents more than 8,500 state and municipal employees across Alaska.

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