

Solidarity Update

March 2006

Alaskans Working for Alaska!

A publication of the Alaska State Employees Association—AFSCME Local 52, AFL-CIO

Political Training Introduces Members to Legislature

Union members from around the state assembled in Juneau on February 7 and 8 for a political leadership event organized by ASEA/AFSCME Local 52.

Nearly seventy ASEA members attended the two-day Political Education Leadership Conference. Participants included members of the ASEA State Executive Board as well as chapter officers and stewards from Nome to Ketchikan.

Over the course of the conference, attendees received presentations and took part in discussions examining Alaska's current political realities, legislative developments, and effective ways to communicate with lawmakers.

"The rigorous agenda of the Political Education Leadership Conference contributed to success of the event," said Business Manager Jim Duncan. "Participants were challenged to put their knowledge to work before the conference was over."

After an introduction from President Gordon Glaser, Legislative Lobbyist Fate Putman spoke about the current makeup of Alaska political leadership and the events of the last legislative session, the first of several presentations at the conference.

After a day of intensive analysis and review of political issues relating to state employees, ASEA members met with their respective representatives and senators, attended legislative hearings, and held a dramatic rally on the capitol steps.



Alaska AFL-CIO President Jim Sampson speaks during a labor rally on the steps of the state capitol on February 8. A crowd of approximately 150 people called for better jobs, wages and benefits. The rally coincided with the two-day Political Education Leadership Conference.



Rep. David Guttenberg at the rally on the capitol steps Feb. 8.

Some 150 people held signs, chanted and cheered during the 30-minute rally in front of the capitol. ASEA Business Manager Jim Duncan moved the crowd to louder and louder calls for good jobs, wages and benefits that reportedly brought Gov. Frank Murkowski

to his window on the 3rd floor. "I think we sent a clear message that we support direct involvement in the political process," said Anchorage

Chapter Steward and ASEA PAC Director Phil Petrie. "We're going to watch them until they provide the wages and benefits we deserve."

Alaska AFL-CIO President Jim Sampson spoke to the crowd about the high risks that state employees face with the current legislative majority. Democratic legislators followed, including Rep. Sharon Cissna (D-Anchorage), Rep. David Guttenberg (D-Fairbanks), Rep. Beth Kerttula (D-Juneau) and Rep. Ethan Berkowitz (D-Anchorage).

On two occasions, legislators from both sides of the aisle appeared before political leadership conference. First, Rep. Lisle McGuire (R-Anchorage) and Sen. Hollis French (D-Anchorage) shared the title of keynote speaker (cont. page 2)



Anchorage Chapter member Shelly Boyer-Wood shares the outcome of a group exercise during the recent Political Education Leadership Conference at McPhetres Hall in Juneau.

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during lunch on the first day.

Rep. McGuire said she supported the goals of the conference and encouraged participants to remain in touch with their lawmakers. She stressed the effectiveness of constituent involvement in the legislative process. "I can't overstate the importance of testifying in legislative hearings," she said.

Sen. French drew applause from the audience for his uncomplicated analysis of the legislative issues and political obstacles facing public employees. "If you can help us elect more Democrats, the Legislature can begin working on these important issues," he said.

Later in the day, Sen. Johnny Ellis (D-Anchorage) told conference participants the truth about running and winning a political campaign for public office. Sen. Ellis discussed good campaign practices and how volunteerism from the group can lead to success in upcoming elections that are certain to be close.

"I came away with a better understanding of the dos and don'ts of a political campaign," said Anchorage Chapter Treasurer Roberta Jassal. "He made it clear how important it is to get involved when there are issues you feel strongly about."

Conference participants heard also from AFSCME Legislative Director Chuck Loveless about national legislation affecting Alaska state employees and from AFSCME PEOPLE Program Director Lorraine O'Hara about the value of supporting and participating

in political action.

State Executive Board Secretary Michael Williams, who also serves as the ASEA Political Action Committee (PAC) Treasurer and a member of the Alaska Retirement Management Board, reviewed the manner and limits of ASEA member involvement in political action. He described the Member Advancement Program, through which members can dedicate \$0.50 of regular member dues to the PAC at no additional expense to themselves, and summarized the benefits of the PEOPLE program.

"Participating in the PEOPLE program is relatively cheap. For as little as \$2 per pay period--the cost of a latte, coffee or soda for most members--you can make a difference in the caliber of legislators we send to Juneau," he said. "The funds raised through PEOPLE helps ASEA find political candidates whose views promote legislative equality."

Conference attendees were asked about their own personal contact and knowledge of legislators during a re-

view of every House and Senate district in Alaska. After participants met with their legislators during pre-scheduled visits at the capitol, they were asked again about their experience.

Some members felt empowered by the political education of the day before. "I felt better prepared than my legislators to talk about the issues," said Shannon Guillory, Juneau Chapter Steward. "And I was surprised to learn that some legislators know more about the issues than others do."

Others felt the meetings raised confidence in their lawmakers. "It was an enjoyable experience for me," said Gretchen Nosbisch from Barrow. "Rep. Reggie Joule responded to all my questions and he explained his answers in way I understood."

Not all members were satisfied with their encounters. Several constituents from House District 39, including Nome Chapter Steward Mo Koezuna, visited Rep. Richard Foster. "We were told that state workers make up only



Juneau Chapter Steward Shannon Guillory transcribes a group exercise with the help of Cook Inlet Chapter Steward Allison Gottesman.

1% of his constituency, and he wouldn't defend our benefits, even though we had earned them," she said. "It was an eye-opening experience."

All members are encouraged to use the same tools described at the conference to participate in the legislative process. First, members can always find what legislation is
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Important Legislation the Subject of Political Conference

The legislation below represents some of the pressing political issues facing state employees that were addressed at the recent ASEA/AFSCME Local 52 Political Education Leadership Conference. The ASEA Political Action Committee is tracking all legislation affecting state employees at its web site <http://www.afscmelocal52.org/pac>.

	Public Employee Retirement Benefit	Procurement Privatization	FY07 Operating Budget	FY06 Supplemental Appropriation
Legislative vehicle	HB 475	HB 257	HB 365/SB 228	HB 422/SB 263
Summary	Is expected to modify the public employee retirement plan created under SB 141 (effective July 1, 2006). The defined contribution (401k-style) retirement plan reduces medical benefits for new employees among its many other changes. HB 475 cannot fix the regressive consequences of SB 141.	Would privatize state procurement functions and could eliminate some 180 state positions. ASEA estimates that 120 of those lost positions would be GGU members. Outsourcing procurement will destroy public trust. State employees should be equipped with new electronic tools and make procurement decisions per the State Procurement Code.	FY07 proposed operating budget contains money for GGU negotiated 2% wage increase, negotiated health insurance employer contribution increase, 5% increase to fully fund public retirement program, as well as a \$2.1 mil. appropriation for nurses salary increase resulting from a grievance resolution agreement with ASEA.	FY06 proposed supplemental appropriations contains money for wage increases for certified nurses aides and assisted living aides. Caregivers will benefit from \$421,000 included in the bill under a letter of grievance resolution between the state and the union following a class action grievance from a 2002 reclassification.
Recent action	Referred to STA(H). Committee hearing scheduled for Mar. 7.	Report released by independent auditor indicates \$1 mil. additional expense of hiring procurement contractor under HB 313 pilot program.	Both bills pending in their respective finance committees.	Both bills pending in their respective finance committees.
Notes	Next committee of referral is FIN(H).	HB 257 close to final passage.	The FIN(H) subcommittee for HSS has approved the nursing wage increment.	Wage increase for CNA/ALAs in FY07 budget

	Pharm/Doctors/Auditors in Exempt Service	Outsource DMV Title & Registration Services	Prohibition of Mandatory Overtime for Nurses	Geographic Differential Review
Legislative vehicle	HB 485	HB 344	HB 271	SB 152
Summary	Moves current GGU-represented pharmacists in the Dept. of Health and Social Services and the Dept. Corrections, and GGU-represented corporate income tax forensic auditors in the Dept. of Revenue from classified to exempt service.	Allows auto dealers to keep 7.5% of fees collected from new and used car buyers for title and registration services. Rather than passing this legislation, the money should be put toward DMV for enhanced services.	As amended, the bill requires that public and private facilities report when mandatory overtime is assigned to employees.	Authorizes a \$500,000 appropriation for the purpose of conducting a study to review geographic pay differentials. Because the statutory pay differential is different than the collective bargaining provision, disparities among state employees.
Recent action	Moved out of STA(H) over union's objection. Currently in FIN(H), scheduled for hearing.	HB 344 has received two hearings in STA(H) and will soon be referred to FIN(H).	Passed out of HES(H) after committee hearings.	Pending in FIN(S).
Notes	HB 485 appears to be fasttracked for passage.	ASEA is working to stop advancement of this bill.	ASEA supports the bill and opposes mandatory overtime to compensate for understaffing.	ASEA requesting geographic pay differentials be the same for all state employees.

Conference...

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on the table by visiting the bill tracking feature on the ASEA PAC website. The PAC web site can be found at <http://www.afscmelocal52.org/pac>.

The bill tracking feature includes summaries of the individual pieces of legislation, as well as bill status, sponsor and recommendation by the Political Action Committee and the State Executive Board. Once members become familiar with the issues, the PAC web site also allows members to send public opinion messages to a bill's sponsor, a legislator, or a PAC director.

When communicating with legislators, a concise message with emphasizing that you are a constituent will make the greatest impact. Also, look for legislative alerts from the union during times that communicating your point of view will make the greatest difference.

Additionally, the PAC web site provides important information about committee hearings for individual bills. Testifying at a hearing on a topic that concerns you can be a very effective form of political involvement.

Most importantly, ASEA members can support political action by joining the ASEA Member Advancement Program (MAP) and the AFSCME PEOPLE Program. Both programs strengthen the Political Action Committee with the resources to support incumbents who have helped us in the past, as well as to support new candidates who will help us in the future.

News In Brief

ASEA 11th Biennial Convention

Elected delegates from the 19 ASEA chapters will convene as the 11th Biennial Convention of ASEA/AFSCME Local 52 on March 16-19, 2006 at the Hilton Hotel in Anchorage.

Mail-in Ballots Due March 30

ASEA elections for union officers, Contract Negotiations Committee and Judicial Panel will be decided by a ballot count on March 30. All mail-in ballots must be delivered by March 30 to the return address with the ballot.

AFSCME Convention Nominations

Nominations are now being accepted for delegates to the AFSCME 37th Biennial Convention in Chicago on August 7-11, 2006. All nominations must be made by petition bearing the signatures of 10 members in good standing. Please consult the Notice of Nomination on the AFSCME Local 52 web site for details. The deadline for nominations is March 30.

Member—to—Member

Annual and personal leave can be donated to Local 52 members for use as "sick leave" after sick, annual or personal leave has been exhausted. Recipients must use all accrued sick and annual leave before using donated leave, and unused donated leave cannot be returned to donors. Members can donate leave by filling out a leave slip in the name of the person receiving the donation and delivering, or mailing it, to ASEA/AFSCME Local 52 at 1577 C St., Ste. 201, Anchorage, AK 99501.

The following members need leave donations

Lynne Bush—Environmental Conservation, Anchorage
Doretha Walker—Health & Social Services, Fairbanks
Susan Stewart-Viviano—Revenue, Anchorage
Michelle Moore—Health & Social Services, Anchorage
Virginia Hendrix—Revenue, Anchorage
Colleen Ouzts—Law, Anchorage
Julia Harbers—Health & Social Services, Juneau
Jaylene Day—Health & Social Services, Fairbanks
Lori McDonnell—Health & Social Services, Anchorage
Mary Music—Health & Social Services, Anchorage
Karen Reyes—Labor & Workforce Development, Juneau
Venessa Brazfield—Health & Social Services, Anchorage
Terri Panilo—Health & Social Services, Anchorage
Kara Epperly—Administration, Juneau
Kathleen Raynor—Natural Resources, Anchorage
Jennifer Baker—Health & Social Services, Homer
Sherrie Plater—Health & Social Services, Anchorage
Theresa Titus—Health & Social Services, Fairbanks
Kathy Gregg—Corrections, Anchorage
Corrine Holt—Labor & Workforce Development, Anchorage
Debra Wiegele—Health & Social Services, Anchorage
Thomas Zalewski—Health & Social Services, Fairbanks

Solidarity Calendar

Mar. 8 <i>Wednesday</i>	Anchorage Chapter General Membership Meeting, Carpenter's Hall, 5:30 p.m.
Mar. 13 <i>Monday</i>	All Staff Meeting in Anchorage, All Union Offices Closed
Mar. 15 <i>Wednesday</i>	ASEA Chapter Officers Training Hilton Hotel, 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Anchorage Chapter Stewards Meeting Carpenter's Hall, 5:30 p.m.
Mar. 16-19	ASEA/AFSCME Local 52 11th Biennial Convention Hilton Hotel, Anchorage
Mar. 21 <i>Tuesday</i>	Political Action Committee (PAC) Teleconference, 5:15-6:00 p.m.
Mar. 27 <i>Monday</i>	Seward's Day State Holiday
Mar. 28 <i>Tuesday</i>	Juneau Chapter Meeting, Juneau Chapter Office/ Teamsters Hall, 12:05-12:55 p.m.
Mar. 30 <i>Thursday</i>	Election Day for Union Officers, Contract Negotiating Committee and Judicial Panel Deadline for AFSCME Convention Nominations
Apr. 5 <i>Wednesday</i>	Anchorage Chapter Executive Board Meeting, Atwood Bldg., Ste. 1620, 5:30 p.m.
Apr. 6 <i>Thursday</i>	Midnight Sun Chapter Executive Board Meeting, Fairbanks Union Office, 5:15 p.m.