

# Solidarity Update

October 2006

For Senate District D / House Districts 8, 9 & 12

## Alaskans Working for Alaska!

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



### Tony Knowles Endorsed in Governors Race

*Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Tony Knowles volunteered for the U.S. Army in 1962, joining the 82nd Airborne Division, and later served his country in Vietnam. He earned a degree in economics from Yale University in 1968. After graduation, he moved to Alaska and worked on oil drilling rigs on the North Slope and in Cook Inlet. In 1969, Knowles started his first of four restaurants including the Downtown Deli in Anchorage. He was elected to the Anchorage Assembly and served twice as mayor. Tony Knowles held the Office of Governor for two terms from 1994 to 2002.*

#### Supports Working Alaskans

As governor, Knowles fought for and won an increase in the minimum wage. He fought back attempts to undermine the laws that protect overtime. Knowles was instrumental in raising workers' compensation benefits and expanding worker training programs, emphasizing high-demand jobs. He issued an executive order directing state agencies to provide equal pay for rural Alaskans.

Under Knowles, unemployment rates dropped to the lowest levels since statehood during eight straight years of statewide job growth. He signed a charter with North Slope oil companies for industry commitments to train and hire locally.

#### Supports Public Employees

Knowles has been a strong advocate for organized labor in the public and private sectors. ASEA/AFSCME Local 52 joins dozens of organized labor organizations that support his campaign.

Knowles opposed the new retirement system for public employees and is a consistent voice for returning to a defined benefits retirement plan. "The

change from a well managed defined benefit system to a chaotic and risky defined contribution (401K) plan took Alaska from what was considered the best run and best public and teacher retirement system in the country to the worst," he said. "We must change that and restore the defined benefit plan."

Knowles supports a public employee pension plan that will encourage careers in public service in Alaska and one that will reward these careers with a decent, livable benefit in retirement.

"Upon re-election," Knowles said, "I will work with the Alaska Retirement Management board, local governments, school districts and the Legislature to implement a new sustainable defined benefit program which would be financially healthy for current em- (cont. page 4)



Tony Knowles (D) is running for the Office of Governor against Sarah Palin (R) and several other candidates.

### Berkowitz Choice for Lt. Governor

Ethan Berkowitz is a pro-labor Democrat and a strong advocate for an Alaska gas pipeline project.

"This project will deliver the greatest return to Alaska—in local-hire jobs, state revenue and cheap energy to Alaska homes, businesses and communities," Berkowitz said.



Ethan Berkowitz

He is a 10-year veteran of the Alaska House and well-known as minority leader for standing up to the Murkowski administration's flawed proposals.

"I'm proud of the support I've received from ASEA/AFSCME Local 52 in every election," he said.

Berkowitz believes that health care and a reinstated pension are critical to any fair compensation package for public employees.

"Undercutting public employee retirement security is bad enough, but SB141 threatens the state's ability to attract and keep top notch public employees, from police to public servants who are our friends, neighbors and fellow Alaskans doing the best job they can to deliver services."

Berkowitz is an Anchorage small business owner and former fisherman.

# ASEA Political Action Committee Endorsements:



**Joe Thomas**  
Senate D

**Joe Thomas** was born in Fairbanks more than fifty years ago and has rolled up his sleeves to help build his community—from the Trans-Alaska pipeline to Fairbanks schools.

“I believe the future for Fairbanks and Alaska is bright. With the right type of leadership, we will build a gas pipeline that will benefit Alaska families for decades to come. My priorities are economic development centered on the Alaska gas line, education to equip our workforce and budget discipline to plan for the long term.”

Thomas opposes the changes to public employee retirement under SB141.

“The destruction of Alaska’s public employee retirement system by Governor Murkowski and the Republican-led Legislature is an affront to our public employees,” said Thomas. “We will not recruit and retain the quality teachers our children deserve and the dedicated public employees Alaskans need without providing adequate pensions, benefits and wages.”

Thomas will seek an alternative to defined contribution so state service doesn’t mean taking a risk with your retirement.

“Alaska’s public employees shouldn’t be expected to become investment professionals in order to manage their retirement accounts.” Thomas said.



**Scott Kawasaki**  
House 9

**Scott Kawasaki** has served six years on the Fairbanks City Council and seeks to represent District 9 in the State House.

Scott worked as a legislative aide to Rep. Tom Brice in 1998 and became increasingly involved with political, civic, and community matters. Scott is a member of the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Fairbanks Symphony Association, Volunteers in Policing, and a lifetime member of the National Rifle Club.

“As your state legislator, I will dream big, act boldly and confront the challenges head-on to get the job done,” said Kawasaki. “I would reinstate municipal revenue sharing to bring down property taxes, fund road and building maintenance here instead of wasteful capital projects across the state, protect the PFD program for all of Alaska’s families and ensure that we get the best possible deal for Alaska’s gas.”

Kawasaki supports the repeal of SB141 and reinstatement of a public employee defined benefit retirement.

“The Republican-led Legislature eliminated the retirement plan for future state employees and hurt our ability to continue to recruit and retain the very best state and municipal workers,” said Kawasaki.

# Spotlight on Leaders Who Support State Workers



**David Guttenberg**  
House 8

**David Guttenberg** was born in New York City in 1951, came to Fairbanks in 1969 and, after working in construction for 25 years, retired from Alaska Laborers Local 943.

Guttenberg is seeking his third term in the State House. He began working in the Legislature as a legislative aide for Tom Moyers and as a finance aide for John Davies. Guttenberg was first elected to the House in 2002.

He is a life long advocate for unions, workers, fair wages, strong benefits and collective bargaining.

Guttenberg voted against SB141 and supports repeal of the defined contribution legislation.

“To serve the people of this state, to fulfill the responsibilities of government, we need a quality workforce that shouldn’t have to question whether their retirement will be ready when they are,” said Guttenberg. “I support a defined benefit retirement for public employees because it’s in the interest of every Alaska family.”



**Bill Johnson**  
House 12

**Bill Johnson** was born in Fairbanks and lives in Delta Junction. He recently earned a PhD from Washington State Univ. in history and works for ASEA/AFSCME Local 52 as a Business Agent.

“When my grandparents came to Alaska in the early 1940s it was a place where dreams could come true,” said Johnson. “Is Alaska still a place where their dreams can come true? It should be, and we can work together to make sure it remains a land of opportunity.”

Johnson is a strong supporter of solving the problems of building the All-Alaska gas line. He believes that Alaska has the wealth and capacity to do development and government right.

“An All-Alaska gas line would provide Alaskans with jobs, with an affordable source of relatively clean energy and the best revenue stream for the state,” Johnson said.

Johnson supports the repeal of SB141 and will work toward returning public employees to a defined benefit retirement plan.

“Not only does SB141 destabilize the futures of state employees, it interferes with the state’s ability to recruit and retain a quality workforce. I will fight to reinstate a defined benefit system,” said Johnson.

## Look Inside for Candidates Who Support State Workers Like You!

### Tony Knowles Endorsed in Governors Race

(cont. from page 1)  
ploys and attractive to new public employees and teachers.”

Instead of panic, the reported liability needs independent verification. He will bring in an independent actuary firm to do another analysis to define the extent of the problem. Also, because health care costs were included, the liability figures were misleading.

“Alaska is one of only four states that include health care costs in calculating employer benefits,” Knowles pointed out. He said that 70-75% funding is normal if health care costs are not part of the equation.

“If we compare apples to apples, and exclude the health care costs, Alaska’s PERS and TRS are funded at approximately 116% and 96% respectively,”

said Knowles. “New requirements are correctly mandating states to include health care in their projections—placing Alaska among the best financially sustainable systems.”

#### Quality Affordable Health Care

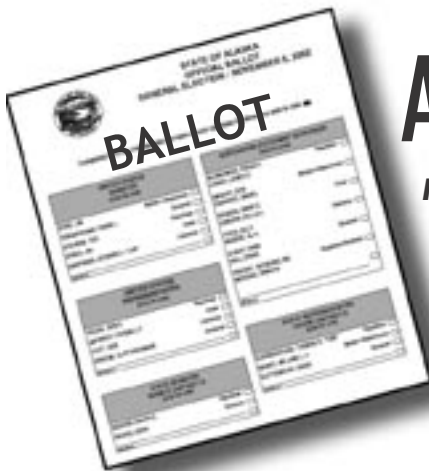
Tony Knowles successfully expanded access to quality and affordable health care to thousands of Alaskans. While governor, Knowles expanded the Women, Infants and Children program which provides nutritious food, health screenings and education to low income families to include more than 10,000 additional Alaskans.

Knowles significantly increased the eligibility of Medicaid. During his administration, Knowles extended coverage to almost 41,000 new Alaskans in both urban and rural Alaska. Knowles

also established a new Medicaid category for breast and cervical cancer, ensuring Alaskan women could receive the care they desperately needed.

Knowles also expanded Medicaid coverage to thousands of uninsured Alaskan families through Denali KidCare. By the end of 2002, more than 25,000 children and 5,000 pregnant women were covered. More than 65% of those children would otherwise have had no access to health care coverage.

Knowles proposes to lower health care and prescription drug costs, expand Denali KidCare to the children of working Alaskans who cannot afford health care, and initiate wellness and prevention programs as part of making health care more affordable and available to Alaskans.



## ASEA Solidarity Update

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### Remember to Vote on Nov. 7!

*Go to [www.afscmelocal52.org](http://www.afscmelocal52.org) for statewide listings!*

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