

TALKING POINTS

- 1. What exactly does Alaska AFSCME Retiree Chapter 52 (AARC52) do for its members?**
- 2. What is the relationship of ASEA/AFSCME Local 52, AFL-CIO to AARC52?**
- 3. What is the AFSCME Retiree Program? What is AFSCME International, AFL-CIO?**



AARC52 believes a public sector retiree, though drawing a pension, remains intrinsically tied to his/her union, and to the actively working public sector employee. AARC52 is grounded in the belief and conviction that, “in deed,” in order to change our circumstances, improve our environment, and assure the security of every public sector retiree, we as a people must become politically active, exercise our civil rights as citizens to ensure social and economic justice to assure we as public sector retirees and those following in our footsteps may enjoy lives of dignity, personal and family fulfillment and security; that all older and retired persons have a responsibility to strive to continue in the creation of a society that incorporates these goals and rights and that retirement provides them with opportunities to pursue new and expanded activities with their unions, civic organizations and their communities. (adopted in part from the Mission Statement of the Alliance of Retired Americans)

The Mission Statement and Objectives of AARC52 (AARC52 Constitution, Article III:

Section 1. The Mission Statement of this Chapter is:

To preserve, protect, and enhance benefits for retirees of the Alaskan public retirement systems.

Section 2. The objectives of this Chapter are:

- To act as a unified voice for Alaskan public retirees.
- To advocate statutory and regulatory changes for the benefit of Alaskan public retirees.
- To recruit into AARC52 retirees from all Alaskan public retirement programs.
- To make AARC52 into a strong and effective organization.
- To inform and educate members and the general public about retirement issues.
- To carry out within the Chapter’s jurisdiction the objectives of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees’ Retiree Organization and such other objectives the Chapter may establish from time to time in conjunction with the parent organization.

There are those who sit around and talk about issues -- albeit very informational -- applying salve to only the symptoms of injustice to the older employees and senior retired citizens of the public sector, tapping into the despair, the confusion, and the fears of the unknown that seem to invade that special time when the quality of life should be at its most golden. Then there is the AFSCME Retiree Program that educates, guides, and motivates its members to step up to the plate, however they are able, whatever their contribution, to become and continue to be active partners in the political and labor movements, to be the “watch-dogs of society” in the tradition of grassroots unionism. The Retiree Program soothes not only the symptoms of injustice of its public sector members and retirees but fights for the cure of societal and political ills through education, civil and political activism -- and, frankly, kicking us in the pants to “Do something about it!”

Under the auspices and guidance of the AFSCME Retiree Program; AFSCME International, AFL-CIO; and ASEA/AFSCME Local 52, AFL-CIO (www.afscmelocal52.org), AARC52 was chartered and granted jurisdiction to a full voting membership, mandating that the chapter shall be open to all members and surviving spouses receiving retirement compensation from any State of Alaska retirement system. Prior affiliation with AFSCME is not a criterion.

AARC52 members are not only members of Alaska AFSCME Retiree Chapter 52, but are members of the AFSCME Retiree Program. The AFSCME Retiree Program pays the annual membership fees for each and every chapter member of its retiree chapters to the Alliance for Retired Americans (www.retiredamericans.org). AARC52 is also a charter member of the Alliance for Retired Americans.

Locally, AARC52 has been involved on behalf of its members as follows:

The ASEA/AFSCME Local 52 Biennial Convention Assembly in 1998 unanimously passed a resolution establishing Alaska AFSCME Retiree Chapter 52, in accordance with the AFSCME International Biennial Convention mandate to support the AFSCME Retiree Program in establishing local retiree chapters and providing nominal support to those chapters.

AARC52 held its Founding Convention in 2000, followed to date by four biennial conventions held in 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2008. All members in good standing are invited to attend the biennial convention; all attendees are certified delegates to the biennial convention. Per diem, mileage, and hotel accommodations are reimbursable expenses.

AARC52 established an out-of-state executive board seat, dedicated to the representation of its members in the Lower 48 states of the Continental United States, Hawaii and U.S. Territories. In doing so, AARC52 assured no disenfranchisement of those same members in having the opportunity to run for and sit in any seat of the AARC52 Executive Board. The current demographics of the AARC52 Executive Board are the President (Anchorage AK); the Vice President (Kansas); Secretary (Anchorage AK); Treasurer (Anchorage AK/Puerto Rico), Board Member at Large, Position 1 (Kenai AK); Board Member at Large, Position 2 (Kodiak AK); Board Member at Large, Position 3 dedicated seat to out-of-state (Arizona); Trustee, Position 1 (Bellingham WA); and Trustee, Position 2 (Fairbanks AK). The Board meets monthly via teleconference.

AARC52 has conducted five officers and trustees elections, providing the opportunity for every member throughout its jurisdiction to run for office and to vote.

With the assistance of AFSCME International, AARC52 conducts recruitment mailouts every two years, to increase our membership base.

Our dues have REMAINED at \$24.00 per year, per member since its inception. Discussing the AARC52 dues structure for Alaskan retirees with the AFSCME Retiree Program it was determined that AARC52's current dues structure is adequate to support the AFSCME 21st Century Committee's Initiative recommendation of a \$1.20 increase to the per capita without an increase to its members. At the 4th AARC52 Biennial Convention, held March 17, 2006, a consensus of the Assembly voted NO to pass on the AFSCME per capita increase to its members, and chose rather to absorb that increase.

Since 2000, AARC52 has actively participated in lawsuits in its vigilance to preserve the retirement benefits of its members. There has been the "Diminishment of Benefits" lawsuit, consolidated case number 3AN-00-7540 CI with AARC52, RPEA, and NEA joining in a legal effort to reign in the diminution of health benefits of our Alaskan public sector employees. The suit went to the Alaska Supreme Court where Retirees prevailed on 4 of 5 points at issue. The case was then remanded back to Superior Court where a two week trial with witnesses and expert testimony was held in January 2006 presenting evidence regarding: 1) Did the State have sufficient data to make a change? 2) Was there a breach of Contract? 3) Was the State Constitution violated? Under the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, it is stated, "Item 26. While Defendants (the State) were successful in litigating the issues remaining in this case after remand, the Plaintiffs initially prevailed in establishing that Article XII, Section 7, of the Alaska Constitution includes health insurance benefits, see *Duncan*, 71 P.3d at 86-888 and in establishing that Article XII, Section 7 does not merely protect against the diminishment of premium payments made on behalf of retirees. Id. At 888-889. **These were significant issues.** The Court finds that neither party was the prevailing party and that each should bear their own costs and attorney fees." We continue our vigil.

There was also the "Dual Retirees" lawsuit, involving members who joined the PERS/TRS retirement plans before 7/1/77 and retired more than once from the State of Alaska, rectifying the miscalculation of benefits by the state and preserving the entitlement to both a higher monthly pension benefit in the future and reimbursement for the amounts which should have been paid.

AARC52 has seen the successful individual efforts of our members, like Richard French of Ocean Shore, Washington, whose court decision was upheld in the court of appeals, establishing that scratch coating for optical lenses will be covered for all retirees, as well as spouses, even those that have their own plans, with coverage to extend to two sets of lenses rather than one. AARC52 is very interested in the separate lawsuits of member John Gallant and of NEA, challenging and winning the determination that it is unconstitutional for Alaska retirees living outside the State of Alaska to be denied the cost-of-living increase granted to those same class of public sector retirees residing in Alaska. An appeal is pending before the courts.

ASEA/AFSCME Local 52's in-house attorney represents the interests of AARC52 in all legal matters, with the AFSCME Retirement Program stepping forward with grants in payment of legal expenses and providing AFSCME International Counsel to come to Alaska to assist in hearings on various legal matters.

AARC52 members man phone banks to alert members to pertinent issues; i.e., the eventual and alas successful attempt of the Murkowski Administration to terminate the Longevity Bonus of our Alaska Pioneers; the attempted closing of the Anchorage state Retirement and Benefits Office, etc. AARC52 encourages members to send out Public Opinion Messages on pertinent legislative issues.

Our access to a full-time lobbyist offers guidance and represents AARC52 with its legislative issues, through the auspices of ASEA/AFSCME Local 52; and offers voluntary assistance in member political education and communications with their legislators.

AARC52 is actively legislating for a dues check-off for all retiree organizations, to maximize the voice of our retirees and minimizing administrative costs; and follows each Legislative Session closely. AARC52 joins with ASEA/AFSCME Local 52 in reversing SB141 and re-establishing the PERS/TRS defined benefit retirement system for Alaska public sector employees, ensuring the influx of new dollars to the retirement funds, to seek the full funding of the retirement fund.

AARC52 members who were elected as delegates to the 2004 and 2008 Alaska Democratic and Republican National Conventions were sponsored by AFSCME International, AFL-CIO, with fully paid trips, including airfare, per diem, and hotel accommodations.

AARC52 is constitutionally crafted to establish sub-chapters throughout Alaska, the Lower 48, Hawaii, and U.S. Territories. Currently, AARC52 pays annual per capita for our 45 Alaska members of AFSCME Retiree Sub-Chapter 153, Nevada Retirees Connection-USA. We are currently initiating and formulating efforts to establish sub-chapters in Fairbanks, Juneau, and Anchorage, Alaska, with the assistance of the AFSCME Retiree Program and AFSCME International.

AARC52 board members are actively involved in local and national senior organizational meetings, and is actively seeking a coalition foundation for retiree organizations to establish common ground and concerted efforts in the adherence of our mission statements and goals, to assure quality representation of Alaska retirees throughout the United States and its Territories, and to build trust and camaraderie among the ranks that lend to a positive and robust relationship among the various organizations.

AARC52 exercises nationwide efforts to defeat the privatization of prison systems in an effort to preserve not only the physical security of our homes, neighborhoods, and communities but the perpetual fiscal health of public employees.

AARC52 participates in the annual Fairbanks CLC Labor Day Picnic, and the biennial Anchorage CLC Solidarity Picnic.

AARC52 produces a newsletter, with an objective for a quarterly publication to its membership nationwide.

A SUMMARY OF THE BENEFITS, SERVICES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE AFSCME RETIREE PROGRAM:

The AFSCME Retiree Program (www.afscme.org), currently comprising over 235,000 dues paying retirees in 39 chapters and 250 local subchapters is the fastest growing retiree organization in the labor movement and the largest organization of public sector retirees in the United States. This is an addition to the 1.4 million working members in AFSCME. Founded in 1980 the Retiree Program has grown at an average rate of more than 10,000 members a year and has more than 250 state and local groups across the country.

Membership is open to all retired public employees who were members of AFSCME or who are eligible to be members. Spouses are also eligible to join and are encouraged to participate in retiree activities. Essentially, anyone receiving a public pension benefit is eligible for membership in the AFSCME Retirees, even if they were never an AFSCME member prior to retirement.

AFSCME Services to Retiree Chapters

The AFSCME and the Retiree Program are dedicated to helping affiliated retiree chapters fight for the dignity and security of their members. To that end, we try to do everything possible to serve the chapters' needs.

Retiree Program staff are in regular contact with chapter leaders, attend chapter conventions and promote discussion of chapter activities at the Annual Meeting of the Retiree Council, which is composed of the leadership of all our retiree chapters from across the country. This enables the staff to become familiar with the problems of each chapter, in order to help find solutions. Upon request, we provide assistance in the following areas:

- **Pensions and Benefits:** In conjunction with staff from other AFSCME departments, the Retiree Program prepares background material on pension and benefit issues. For some of our chapters we have produced research reports on automatic annual pension COLAs or ad hoc pension increases. These compare the absence of pension increases in one jurisdiction with more generous practices around the country. For other chapters we have prepared studies on such issues as employer-paid health care coverage.

Our research has helped chapters lobby their state legislators on these issues. AFSCME's follow up assistance includes helping chapters put together state legislative mailings and prepare press releases and news conferences.

- **Federal Legislations:** The Retiree Program sends bulletins to chapter leaders on the latest Federal legislation and on other government activities that affect retirees. We inform the leaders of pending votes in Congress, so that they can tell members when to

contact their Representatives and Senators on critical bills. Also, we prepare Federal Legislative Updates for distribution at chapter conventions and meetings.

In addition, the Retiree Program represents the chapters at meetings of the major national seniors coalitions - ensuring that public sector interests are addressed and AFSCME's views are known before they set their legislative agendas.

- **Organizing:** The Retiree Program assists the chapters in internal organizing drives. We have prepared numerous direct mail packages for chapters, and written chapter brochures. We have also worked with chapters on establishing retiree organizing committees and developing a range of local activities and programs to build membership.
- **Education:** AFSCME and the Retiree Program conduct education programs for retiree chapter conventions on subjects such as current Federal legislation, retirement planning and leadership development. In addition, we have produced books and pamphlets on various subjects of interest to public sector retirees, such as Planning for Your Retirement, Planning for Your Survivors, Your Social Security Benefits, Getting Well with DRGs and What is Long-Term Care? These and other materials are sent to chapters upon request for distribution at meetings.
- **Public Affairs:** AFSCME works in concern with the Public Affairs staff of our affiliates to build community support for public sector retiree issues. We help with news conferences, press releases, newspaper articles, radio announcements and television -- whatever is needed to get our message across.

Chapter Issues - An Action Agenda

AFSCME retiree chapters serve to unite and mobilize retirees behind common goals, particularly the protection and improvement of their public sector pension and health benefits.

With the help from AFSCME's councils and locals and the AFSCME Retiree Program, our retiree chapters have had many success stories. Here are some recent examples:

New York State: AFSCME's New York affiliates (CSEA/Local 1000 and Retiree Chapter 1000; Council 82 and Retiree Chapter 82; and District Council 37 and Retiree Chapter 37) worked together to establish a permanent **annual COLA** (cost-of-living adjustment) on public pensions.

Pennsylvania: State government retirees won an employer-paid **prescription drug card** with reasonable co-pays, thanks to AFSCME Council 13 and Retiree Chapter 13.

Ohio: Statewide Retiree Chapter 1184 -- with help from the AFSCME Ohio councils and locals -- successfully lobbied for a **guaranteed 3 percent** annual COLA for every Ohio public pensioner, every year.

Hawaii & New York City: With Medicare Part B premiums on the rise, Hawaii Retiree Chapters 152 and 646, as well as New York City Chapter 37, conducted winning campaigns for full **Part B reimbursement** to public retirees.

Illinois: The negotiating skill of AFSCME Council 31 helped Retiree Chapter 31 secure employer-paid **dental coverage** for state retirees.

Los Angeles: In addition to employer-paid health care coverage for retirees and spouses, AFSCME Retiree Chapter 36 (with Council 36) recently won paid **health care coverage for surviving spouses** of city retirees.

Rhode Island: Thanks to a lobbying campaign by Retiree Chapter 94, the state nearly doubled the **retiree death benefit**.

On the national level, AFSCME and its retiree chapters are involved in a wide range of Federal issues that are important to senior citizens. These include protecting Social Security and Medicare, adding a REAL prescription drug benefit to Medicare, controlling health care costs and establishing a system of universal coverage of long term care.

AFSCME has also been a leading proponent to get Congress to repeal the Social Security Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) -- the two public pension offsets that unfairly slash or eliminate the Social Security benefits of many Alaska retirees. AFSCME is leading the coalition that is supporting HR 147, the GPO/WEP repeal bill.

Benefits to Individual Members

Members receive an official membership card from the International. They also receive subscriptions to AFSCME's national magazine, the *Public Employee* (which features a page devoted to retiree issues) and the Retiree Program's quarterly newsletter, *PrimeTIME*.

AFSCME extends the retirees any benefit in the AFL-CIO Union Privilege Benefit Program to which the International subscribes (known as "AFSCME Advantage" benefits). Striving always to meet the needs of their members, AFSCME currently offers the following:

AFSCME Scholarship Programs (available to members and members' children/grandchildren)
AFSCME Family Scholarship

- Jerry Clark Memorial Scholarship
- Joe Parisi Memorial Scholarship
- Nadra Floyd Memorial Scholarship
- Union Plus Scholarship Award
- Union Plus National Labor College Scholarship
- Union Leaders of the Future Scholarship

AT&T Wireless Discounts

Auto Buying Service

Auto Buying

Auto Insurance
Broadband Phone Services (VoIP)
Car Rental Discounts
Cingular Wireless Discounts
Consumer Reports Online Discount
Unionplus Credit Card
Credit Counseling
Dell Computers
Education Services (provides information about loans, scholarships, how to select a school, how to prepare for college entry tests, and much more)
Entertainment Discounts (movie tickets, rentals; theme parks; theaters; and sporting events)
Flower Service
Goodyear Tire and Service Discounts
Health Club Discounts
Health Savings
Home Heating Oil Discount
Internet Service
Legal Service (free and discounted legal assistance) - NOTE: Not readily accessible for Alaskan residents; AFSCME is actively soliciting interest to sign on new attorneys statewide to more readily accommodate those residing in Alaska.
Loan Program (personal and home equity loans) - NOTE: Only available to Lower 48 residents. Unionplus is not currently licensed to grant loans in Alaska.
Mortgage and Real Estate
Motor Club
Moving Discount
Online Tax Service
Pet Services (savings on veterinarian services, pet health insurance premiums)
Powell's Bookstore
Secured Credit Card
Travel Center
Union-Made Checks
Union-Made Clothing Discounts
UnionSecure Supplemental Insurance
Your Credit Score

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