

Solidarity Update

June 2005



Alaskans Working for Alaska!

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



A Groundswell Against Retirement Changes—The nation's capital, as well as the state capital, heard vocal opposition to replacing retirement pensions with individual retirement accounts. President Gordon Glaser and Business Manager Jim Duncan attended this Washington D.C. rally against Social Security privatization in April while participating in an AFSCME Leadership Institute.

ASEA Members Protest Legislation

Dozens of bills affecting state employees were introduced during the first session of the 24th Alaska Legislature and the subsequent special session. Four bills in particular—SB 141, HB 161, HB 147, and SB 130—threatened to make significant and long-term changes to the employment and retirement of ASEA members.

SB 141, the Retirement Reform bill, creates a defined contribution retirement system for new hires effective July 1, 2006. ASEA members demonstrated on the Capital steps against SB 141 on May 4. SB 141 and the individual retirement accounts it creates receive special attention in a separate article.

HB 161, the Retiree Return bill, was originally introduced to extend the retired public employee rehire program adopted in 2001. Union efforts to limit

the particular positions the program could fill and to require that rehired retirees be retired from public service for at least six months prior to returning were defeated on the House floor. HB 161 passed both the House and Senate before the end of the regular session and the Governor is expected to sign it.

HB 161 updates the process allowing retired public employees to return to state service and receive both a salary and retirement pension. Importantly, the bill limits state agencies from hiring retired public employees with concurrent retirement benefits unless the employer can demonstrate a compelling need and can follow a strict competitive hiring process.

If rehired, a retiree's medical retire- (cont. page 4)

Bill Changing State Retirement Passes

SB 141, the Retirement Reform bill, was a legislative rollercoaster ride of bipartisan compromise and majority control. The bill implementing individual retirement accounts for new public employees was voted down twice, and amended multiple times in standing committees and on the House floor. After each chamber rejected the amendments made by the other, SB 141 was sent to three (3) separate conference committees, each with three members of the Senate and three members of the House.

The House amended SB 141 to include a defined benefit (DB) plan option (Sponsor: Eric Croft, D-Anchorage) and to sunset the defined contribution (DC) system after one year if the long-term problems of DB plan were not resolved (Sponsor: Bruce Weyhrauch, R-Juneau). The Senate majority and the Governor rejected these efforts to reach an acceptable bipartisan compromise.

In the end, House members adopted the third conference committee report on May 23, 11 days into the special session called by Gov. Murkowski to complete his legislative agenda. The Senate had adopted the free conference committee report two days earlier, but had already contributed to legislative gridlock by making significant education funding contingent on the passage of retirement reform.

Effective July 1, 2006, new teachers and municipal and state employees will stop contributing to the PERS/TRS retirement plans, but rather will put mon- (cont. page 3)

WIC Update to Members

The Women's Issues Committee has prepared a second online survey to collect your opinions on health care topics. This is not a gender specific survey—we encourage all ASEA members to participate. The survey will be posted on www.afscmelocal52.org and be available for one month.

Regarding career and leadership training, we have taken multiple approaches to your needs. These include Pink Link PowerPoint presentations and group training sessions.

WIC members are building three electronic presentations to help the ASEA members with their personal career goals. The topics are Resume Writing and Interviewing Skills, Workplace Etiquette and Mentoring, and Communications and Listening. These quiet coaches will be freely available online to members seeking insight or assistance for professional development and career advancement.

We have also planned an AFSCME leadership training session. AFSCME Int'l will train us to train others. The Juneau Chapter, Fairbanks Chapter, and the State Executive Board have expressed financial support. We're looking for input from individual members and chapter officers in order to schedule dates and locations.

Statewide Elections Decided

The Statewide Elections Committee certified two elections this spring to fill the State Executive Board seats of Treasurer, Technical Representative, Professional Representative, Southeast Representative, and to decide a question to amend the ASEA Constitution. Earlier, incumbent Michael Williams won the position of Secretary and Wyatt Wheeler took Southcentral Representative in uncontested races.

The March 2005 election returned two other incumbents to the State Executive Board—Karen Zubillaga as Treasurer and Stephen Wright as Southeast Representative.

Sheila Fowlkes took over the Technical Representative seat after a race against Toya Winton, and Christopher Pace beat Eileen A. Olson after a very close runoff election for the Professional Representative seat.

A question to amend the ASEA Constitution to establish the Class One Committee as a standing committee passed.

March 2005 Election Results

Treasurer			
	Ballots	%	Elected
Rich Sewell	410	47%	
Karen Zubillaga	465	53%	X
Total Valid Votes	875	100%	
Technical Representative			
	Ballots	%	Elected
Sheila Fowlkes	142	67%	X
Toya Winton	69	33%	
Total Valid Votes	211	100%	
Professional Representative			
	Ballots	%	Elected
Billie Benedict	119	25%	
Jacob Gemmell	26	6%	
Eileen A. Olson	130	28%	Runoff
Christopher Pace	195	41%	Runoff
Total Valid Votes	470	100%	
Southeast Representative			
	Ballots	%	Elected
Nadine Lefebvre	59	25%	
Stephen Wright	174	75%	X
Total Valid Votes	233	100%	
Constitutional Amend. "Class One Committee"			
	Ballots	%	Elected
ACCEPT	750	86%	X
REJECT	189	14%	
Total Valid Votes	94	100%	

May 2005 Runoff Results

Professional Representative			
	Ballots	%	Elected
Eileen A. Olson	247	49%	
Christopher Pace	255	51%	X
Ballot with no vote	2	>0%	
Total Valid Votes	504	100%	



State Executive Board and friends in Ketchikan on May 20-21—From left to right, Roberta Homes-Carter (ASEA Admin. Assist.), Sheila Fowlkes (Tech. Rep.), Wade Wahrenbrock (Rural Rep.), Barbara Brandt (Northern Rep.), Stephen Wright (Southeast Rep.), Karen Zubillaga (Treas.), Gordon Glaser (Pres.), Jim Duncan (ASEA Bus. Manager), Wyatt Wheeler (Central Rep.), Gloria Eggleton (Class 1 Rep.), Ken Allen (AFSCME Int'l Vice Pres.), Michael Williams (Secty.), Sue Layton (Admin. Support Rep.), and Chris Pace (Prof. Rep.).

News In Brief

Contract Published

Following the successful passage of legislation to fund the employee contract, the 2004-2007 Collective Bargaining Agreement is fully implemented.

Complete employee contracts with index are being printed and will be distributed to all GGU members in the near future. In the meantime, the contract is available online at www.afscmelocal52.org.

New Steward Policy

Changes to ASEA Policies & Procedures have resulted in a new statewide Chief Stewards Committee to direct the selection and distribution of stewards among the state worksites. The committee will also promote the Member Action Team model for worksite communications.

The new committee will be made up of chief stewards from each ASEA chapter. See ASEA P&P 9.00.000.

BA Position Vacancy

ASEA/AFSCME Local 52 is actively seeking a business agent/organizer to join its Anchorage staff. The position's primary duty will be organizing.

An announcement of the position vacancy with a complete description of job duties and requirements is available on the ASEA website at www.afscmelocal52.org.

The deadline for applications is June 10, 2005.

AFSCME Int'l Appts.

Chris Lyou has been appointed to the AFSCME Corrections United National Steering Committee, John Roxburgh has been appointed to the AFSCME Gay and Lesbian Rights Advisory Committee, and Eileen Olson has been appointed to the AFSCME Health Care Advisory Committee.

Lyou was appointed Jan. 19, and Roxburgh and Olson were appointed Feb. 5. All three appointments last through the 2006 International Convention.

AlaskaSEA.net Webmail to Begin

All ASEA members will receive notification of personal email accounts on the new AlaskaSEA.net webmail system. Announcements will be sent by email to GGU members with state e-mail addresses or by U.S. Mail to those without state e-mail addresses.

The ASEA webmail service is intended to provide free, fast, safe, and secure electronic mail for all union members.

The AlaskaSEA.net webmail system has several noteworthy features.

- If you have a state email account, your union email account will be very similar.
- If you have a state email account, you will receive notification when mail arrives at your union email account.
- Your username for logging on to your webmail account is the same as your state assigned UserID.
- A random password will be issued with your initial notification. Please log in and select a new password.
- After you are notified, the Internet address for checking your webmail will be <http://www.AlaskaSEA.net>.

New Anchorage Business Agent Assignments

Stan Hafferman

Dept. of Education & Early Dev.
Dept. of Transportation
Dept. of Military & Vet. Affairs
Dept. of Law
Kenai Peninsula (All Depts.)

Sue Ernisse

Dept. of Fish & Game
Dept. of Natural Resources
Dept. of Environmental Conserv.
Dept. of Corrections
Dept. of Labor & Workforce Dev.
Bethel (All Depts.)
Dillingham (All Depts.)
Kodiak (All Depts.)

Charles Felder

Dept. of Administration
Dept. of Commerce, Comm. & E/D
Dept. of Revenue
Mat-Su Valley (All Depts.)
Anchorage Pioneers' Home

Doug Carson

Dept. of Health & Social Services (not Anchorage Pioneers Home)
Dept. of Public Safety

George Zuke

Organizing
Steward Development & Training
Chapter Support

SB 141...

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ey into individual retirement accounts. Each individual account will receive defined contributions from the employer and the employee, and be managed for the benefit of the individual employee. Current public employees and those hired before the effective date will not see any change to the existing defined benefit retirement plan.

A few provisions of SB 141 will take effect one year earlier on July 1, 2005. Among those changes is the restructuring of the pension boards. The Governor will combine the PERS, TRS and Investment boards into a super board whose members will be appointed by the Governor. This effectively makes the super board a political body and removes a vested right of PERS/TRS participants to choose their own representatives.

The new board will no longer hear

appeals from plan participants, who must instead appeal to the new Office of Administrative Appeals.

Retired public employees under the Tier I provisions will be affected by SB 141. Under the bill, the so-called "Ad Hoc" Post Retirement Pension Adjustments may only be made by the State if the retirement system is 105% funded. If the State continues to underfund the defined benefit plan and suffer losses in the stock and bond markets, the possibility of 105% funding is unlikely.

The DC plan prescribed by SB 141 does nothing to address the unfunded liabilities owed to retirement plan participants. The DC plan contributes to the unfunded liability problem by redirecting retirement funds into individual accounts and away from the pension system. The DC plan also discourages the recruitment and retention of future employees, the very employees whose retirement funds could meet the needs of the underfunded system.

Session...

(cont. from page 1)

ment benefits are suspended during the time of re-employment and the employer must provide the same medical coverage to the retiree that is offered to other employees. The employer is also responsible for actual retirement system costs during the time of re-employment. Employers are required to work with the retirees to pass on expertise in a plan to reduce dependence on retired public employees.

HB 161 becomes effective July 1, 2005, but provides a six-month exemption to the new rules for currently employed rehired retirees whose re-employment began prior to November 3, 2004.

HB 147, the Insurance Reform bill, was added to the expanded call for the "not so special session." Both the House and Senate approved a conference committee report on May 15. The Governor is expected to sign the bill.

HB 147 originally would have required self-funded government trusts like the ASEA Health Benefits Trust to make financial disclosures to the state. The language affecting health trusts was removed from the final version of the bill after a conference committee was told that the administration could regulate self-funded government trusts as insurance companies.

HB 257, the Procurement Privatization bill, passed both chambers in two different versions, but the differences remained unresolved by the end of the regular session. Although the bill did not pass this session, a vote on HB 257 by the House or Senate could come up at any time during the next regular session.

As drafted, HB 257 prescribed a complete expansion of a procurement privatization pilot project to all state departments. However, HB 257 passed the House only as a one-year extension, no expansion of the original pilot project that would otherwise expire June 30, 2006.

The bill, as passed by the Senate, extends the pilot project by 4 years and also added money for procurement software for use by state employees. The State's failure to purchase procurement software for in-house use has limited state procurement employees from showing that they can compete with a procurement contractor. In either version, HB 257 would continue the private contractors exemption from observing the Procurement Code.

SB 130, the Workers' Compensation Reform bill, was adopted as a conference committee report by both chambers during the special session is certain to be signed.

SB 130 creates a new workers' compensation appeals commission to be appointed by the Governor. Appeals from the workers' compensation boards will go to this commission instead of Superior Court. Only appeals from the commission will go to the Supreme Court. Limits to the type of care and pre-existing injury were added to the final version.

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 626 "F" Street, Anchorage, AK 99501.

The following members need leave donations

Dave Caylor, Fish & Game, Anchorage
Katrina Greiner, Health & Social Services, Juneau
Evelyn Cabalhin, Health & Social Services, Juneau
Patricia Beckner, Corrections, Nome
Marilyn Joiner, Health & Social Services, Anchorage
Mina Torvie, Administration, Anchorage
Elizabeth F. Ridge, Public Safety, Fairbanks
Nekeysha Taylor, Health & Social Services, Anchorage
Patricia Wheaton, Revenue, Juneau
Suzn Hanson, Labor & Workforce Dev., Fairbanks
Rachel Dugaqua, Natural Resources, Juneau
Mona Miguel, Natural Resources, Anchorage
Shari Spitzer, Health & Social Services, Anchorage
Belinda Bowman, Administration, Anchorage
John Hocker, Law, Kenai
Marian Sampson, Transportation & PF, Juneau

Solidarity Calendar

June 8 <i>Wednesday</i>	Anchorage Chapter General Membership Meeting, Carpenter's Hall, 5:30 p.m.
June 11 <i>Saturday</i>	Midnight Sun Chapter Member/Family Apprec. Day, Pioneer Park, 11:00 a.m. (Donations for Fairbanks Community Food Bank requested)
June 15 <i>Wednesday</i>	Anchorage Chapter Stewards Meeting (In recess, no meeting)
June 16 <i>Thursday</i>	Midnight Sun Chapter Stewards Meeting, Fairbanks Union Office, 5:15 p.m.
June 21 <i>Tuesday</i>	Political Action Committee (PAC) Teleconference, 5:15-6:00 p.m.
June 28 <i>Tuesday</i>	Juneau Chapter Meeting, Juneau Chapter Office/ Teamsters Hall, 12:05-12:35 p.m.
July 4 <i>Monday</i>	Independence Day State Holiday
July 5 <i>Tuesday</i>	Midnight Sun Chapter Executive Board Meeting, Fairbanks Union Office, 5:15 p.m.
July 6 <i>Wednesday</i>	Anchorage Chapter Executive Board Meeting, Atwood Bldg., Ste. 1620, 5:30 p.m.
July 13 <i>Wednesday</i>	Anchorage Chapter General Membership Meeting, Carpenter's Hall, 5:30 p.m.
Aug. 6 <i>Saturday</i>	Anchorage Chapter Membership Picnic, American Legion Spenard Post 28, 11:00-5:00 p.m.
Sept. 2-3	State Executive Board Quarterly Session, Fairbanks, Location & Time TBA