

# Solidarity Update

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



SUMMER  
2014

## A Letter From ASEA Executive Board President

Thank you!

My heartfelt thanks to the delegates, State Executive Board, Executive Director and staff for their hard work and dedication for successfully navigating through ASEA/AFSCME Local 52's 15th Biennial Convention. Yes, we quarreled, argued and debated. Just like any other large family trying to get their voices heard. As a wise scholar once said, "Democracy is messy."

One of the points of contention was my decision not to ask for personal preferences when making committee assignments. My intention was to try something different in order to accommodate as many delegates as possible and to make an effort to ensure the make-up of our committees had a good cross section of demographics and gender equality. Did it work? Maybe, maybe not. But after hearing from a majority of delegates, it is clear that delegates want to be asked for their preferences, even if they can't all be accommodated. Lesson learned.

This Convention we invited two gubernatorial candidates to speak as part of ASEA/AFSCME Local 52's Strategic Plan on educating and

communicating with our membership. Educating our membership about the political climate in Alaska is vital to our Union. Alaska has gone from a positive cash flow to a negative cash flow and State workers are taking the hit— from Universal Space Standards to positions being left open and programs being cut. Unions are being attacked at both the municipal and state level. We must be diligent in supporting labor candidates for us to continue to live in communities of our choice. We bring value to our communities by educating our children in local schools, volunteering for local charities, shopping at local grocery stores and supporting our chosen house of worship. We collectively bring economic and spiritual values to communities across the State of Alaska. Alaska works because we do!

The Convention has ended but the conversation continues. Now the hard part starts. We need to change the political climate at the State level. None of us can go it alone; we need our families to be involved. So sisters and brothers, let us unite in the fight. Please Vote.

*President Val Kenny*

## Alaska's 28th Legislative Comes To An End

The Alaska Legislature wrapped up its second and final session April 25, 2014, five days later than its expected adjournment date. Gaveling a close to the 90-day session was put off while the Senate and House reconciled versions of the Governor's education legislation.

The legislation, House Bill 278, was opposed by the ASEA Political Action Committee (PAC) and organized labor groups from the start.

The bill contained inadequate funding for school districts, as well as harmful proposals affecting teachers — including increasing time to tenure from 3 to 5 years and a statewide salary schedule.

By the time the sticking point of one-time versus formula funding for education was

resolved by the two chambers, most of the offensive language affecting teachers had been removed.

The delayed adjournment pushed three ballot initiatives from the primary election in August to the General Election in November. The questions of Bristol Bay protection, marijuana legalization, and raising the Minimum Wage will appear on the Nov. 4 ballot.

Proposition 1, the referendum to repeal the Governor's Big Oil welfare legislation Senate Bill 21, remains on the Aug. 19 ballot.

SB 21 has resulted in billions of dollars in lost revenue from reduced royalties on state petroleum resources. Subsequently, the state is spending money from savings to fund operating

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## Famous Words of Solidarity

*"There is no political democracy without economic democracy.*

*- Popula Banner*

*"There is nothing fairer than workmen having unions for their mutual benefit."*

*- Will Rogers (1879-1935), humorist, political commentator, journalist, actor, in Freedom of the Press 1935*

*"What can Labor do for itself? The answer is not difficult. Labor can organize, it can unify; it can consolidate its forces. This done, it can demand and command.*

*- Eugene Debs, in The Bending Cross, 1949*

*(From Great Labor Quotations Sourcebook and Reader Peter Bollen)*

# Solidarity Update

## Did You Know?

### Did You Know That:

Memorial Day was originally known as Decoration Day?



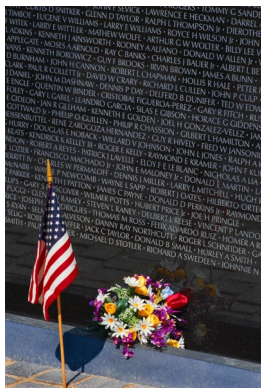
### Did You Know That:

Memorial Day originated in the years following the Civil War. It became a federal holiday in 1971 when Congress passed the Uniform Monday Holiday Act, establishing Memorial Day as the last Monday in May to create a three-day weekend for federal employees. The original date observed had been May 30th.



### Did You Know That:

*Each year on Memorial Day a national moment of remembrance takes place at 3:00 p.m. local time.*



## The 15th Biennial Convention - From A Delegate's View

This year it was my honor and pleasure to attend the 15<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention of the Alaska State Employees Association as an elected delegate by the members of my Chapter. Thank you, Cook Inlet Chapter for that honor. It was my pleasure because it provided me the opportunity to meet and interact with brothers and sisters from across the State. Delegates represented woodland firefighters, fish and game people, nurses, caregivers, correctional workers, heavy equipment operators and administrative personnel. Each delegate came with a desire to preserve jobs and improve working conditions for Alaskans. The Convention was five (5) days, beginning with delegate education on the first day and committee work sessions the next two days. The Business Session of the Convention was on Saturday and Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>.

It was invigorating to be surrounded by so many people who were dedicated to the advancement and success of our Union; and who were committed to accomplishing the hard work that it took to keep us moving forward. Although there was fun and games, it wasn't all fun and games. Delegates came together in their respective Committees to create, review and submit the Resolutions and Constitutional Amendments that would be heard and voted on at Convention. Make no mistake, the Union is you and me. At Convention we direct how ASEA works and what it does. As you may expect, the process was not without some long hours of debate and serious "gnashing of teeth."

Peppered throughout our meetings and gnashing were some informative and somewhat alarming presentations provided by our brothers and sisters of the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). This was not the first time I have enjoyed the company of these fine people who share our fight. As an example of the commitment to our affiliation, AFSCME International President Lee Saunders provided a rousing Keynote Address on Saturday, March 15<sup>th</sup>. It is no secret that the working class of this country and indeed our democracy is under attack and if we don't stand together now, we may not be able to stand together later. The caliber and professionalism

of the people of AFSCME make me glad and oh so thankful that they are on our side.

We also heard from gubernatorial candidates Bill Walker and Byron Mallott who shared their vision for Alaska's future. It was good to be able to hear and compare their message first-hand and to ask them questions.

All in all, thirty nine, (39) Resolutions and four (4) Constitutional Amendments were proposed, amended and brought forth to be heard and voted on by the delegates. Thirty seven (37) of the forty (40) proposed Resolutions were adopted and one, (1) of the four, (4) Constitutional Amendments was passed. As summed up by the words of one brother waiting for a cab outside the hotel, "A lot of good work was done at this Convention."

As you might expect, it is a huge commitment of time, energy and determination to organize and manage an event of this magnitude. Whether or not you were a delegate or perhaps a member attendee, our members owe a big thank you to Executive Director Jim Duncan and each and every one of his staff for providing the commitment and putting in so many long hours to make our Convention successful. Thank You!

I was proud, glad, sad and exhausted as I drove home. I was proud to have been a part of it all, glad that it was over, but also sad that it was. I was tired but it was the kind of tired that was fulfilling and satisfying as in "Mission Accomplished." I encourage every ASEA member to seek nomination and election to represent their Chapter as a delegate to the Alaska State Employee Association's 16<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention scheduled for March 2016.

In the meantime, there are many ways to get involved—you can become a steward, work on one of several committees, get elected to the Executive Board or join the Political Action Committee. In this organization every member has the opportunity to have their say and these are great ways to have a voice in your future.

*In Solidarity*

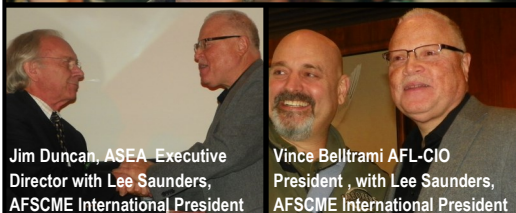
*Tony Lopez,  
Cook Inlet Chapter*



# Solidarity Update

## Photos From ASEA's 15th Biennial Convention

Delegates at ASEA 15th Biennial Convention



Jim Duncan, ASEA Executive Director with Lee Saunders, AFSCME International President

Vince Belltrami AFL-CIO President, with Lee Saunders, AFSCME International President



Finance Committee Meeting



Women's Committee Meeting



Delegates at Convention in Session



## Alaska's 28th Legislative Session Comes To An End

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and capital needs while Big Oil in Alaska has made no commitment to turn tax cuts into concrete benefits for the state.

ASEA supports the 'Vote Yes' campaign to pass Proposition 1 and repeal SB 21.

The second session of the Legislature is the make-or-break time for pending bills. If not passed by both chambers before adjournment, legislation will need to be reintroduced before being considered anew by the next Legislature.

Teachers and public employees alike will see increased stability in the PERS/TRS retirement system that received a \$3 billion lump sum payment toward the estimated \$12 billion unfunded liability.

HB 385 also authorized annual payments to amortize the entire liability by 2037 with a provision to restore assets to the General Fund if all liabilities are satisfied.

The lump sum legislation had its roots in a proposal by Sen. Johnny Ellis several years ago. This session the actual lump sum language first appeared in the operating budget submitted by the Governor and was quickly stripped out while in the House Finance Committee, then appeared briefly in a version of a bill to ease municipal PERS obligations. Later the language was written into HB 278 as part of a "pay as you go" program for TRS.

Legislators appealed for stand-alone legislation to finance the unfunded liability and HB 385 was submitted. After introduction, HB 385 passed with few changes.

This session also featured essential budget bills that passed with language to fund state employee wages and benefits, including those for employees in the GGU and represented by ASEA.

Dozens of other bills were tracked by ASEA and received recommendations from the PAC after members considered the benefits and risks to ASEA members.

One such bill was the DMV fee skimming bill (SB 127) introduced by Sen. Cathy Giessel and opposed by the PAC. The bill would have allowed private contractors, who already are permitted to charge a service fee for registering vehicles, to retain 15% of the DMV fees collected.

A fiscal analysis estimated that \$2 million in state revenue would be lost in this giveaway to banks, car dealers, and private DMV storefronts, while DMV itself would continue to process all the paperwork.

SB 127 quickly passed the Senate Floor and the House State Affairs Committee. After ASEA sent out a Legislative Alert requesting members contact their legislator to oppose the bill, SB 127 expired in the House Finance Committee. ASEA will continue to oppose any legislation that promotes the outsourcing of public service jobs.

The Legislature did not address the benefit gap facing new public employees since 2006 when the Defined Benefit (DB) pension retirement system was replaced with Defined Contribution (DC) individual retirement accounts for new hires.

The unknowable and inevitably inadequate DC retirement for public employees and teachers hinders recruitment and retention of qualified employees in positions directly serving Alaskans.

The affected employees themselves, already in the thousands, face the uncertainty of outliving their benefits even after a dedicated career in state service and not knowing whether an untested retiree medical benefit will meet their needs after navigating all the hoops of eligibility.

Legislation to provide a DB retirement option (Tier 5) for new hires and for employees currently enrolled in the DC retirement was introduced by Sen. Dennis Egan and Rep. Beth Kerttula.

SB 30 went on to receive three hearings in the Senate State Affairs Committee before the session adjourned. ASEA will continue to work with the Alaska Public Pension Coalition and

Bill Walker  
Guest SpeakerByron Mallott  
Guest SpeakerHollis French  
Guest Speaker

Group Photo of the ASEA /AFSCME 15th Biennial Convention Delegates

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# Solidarity Update

## ASEA HEALTH TRUST NEWS



## ASEA Health Trust Benefits Annual Open Enrollment May 12-June 6

### Invest In Your Own Good Health

#### ASEA Health Trust Benefits Annual Open Enrollment Is May 12 - June 6!

Open Enrollment is your once-a-year opportunity to change your Health Plan choice or sign up for a HCRA. Remember:

- ◆ Any changes you make will take effect with the new Plan Year, which begins July 1, 2014.
- ◆ You don't need to enroll if you want to rollover your current Health Plan for next year.
- ◆ **Your HCRA does NOT rollover.** If you want a HCRA for 2014/15 you must

enroll.

- ◆ It's easy to enroll online! Just go to [aseahealth.org](http://aseahealth.org) and click on "Open Enrollment".

### New! Informed Health Line from Aetna

#### Get answers from a registered nurse, day or night

With one simple call, you can:

- ◆ Learn more about health conditions
- ◆ Find out more about a medical test or procedure
- ◆ Get help preparing for a doctor's visit

Or go online for even more health information. Log in to your secure member website at [www.aetna.com](http://www.aetna.com) to explore the resources available to you. Select **Health Programs** and **24-Hour Nurse Line**. Or, click on **Health Programs** and **Get Health Information**. Here's what you can do:

- ◆ Learn more about health conditions
- ◆ Learn about an upcoming medical test
- ◆ Research a new medication you're taking and more

Watch for more information in the summer edition of *Health Trust News* and on the Health Trust website – [aseahealth.org](http://aseahealth.org).

## Alaska's 28th Legislative Session Comes To An End

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other concerned Alaskans to restore a DB retirement option for all public employees.

The crushing workload for probation officers and parolee recidivism prompted Sen. Hollis French and Rep. Chris Tuck to introduce HB 101 and SB 114, respectively, to limit caseload numbers.

The legislation would ensure probation officers have more time to closely monitor felons on probation and to better rehabilitate offenders through the probation process.

Though the two bills did not pass this session, authorization for the hiring of 22 new probation officers was written into the omnibus crime and corrections legislation SB 64.

This session also featured a handful of bills that sought to alter sections of the state's Constitution that have contributed to making Alaska the success it is.

Senate Joint Resolution 9 was introduced by Sen. Mike Dunleavy to proceed with an election to amend the Constitution allowing public resources to be put toward private, religious, and for profit schools.

SJR 9 would remove constitutional provisions

supporting public education and ensuring that public money is spent on public education.

The bill seemed very close to passing the Senate when it appeared on the Senate Floor Calendar, suggesting it had support from the minimum number of senators to pass the resolution (a two-thirds majority or 14 votes). However, the SJR 9 soon returned to the Rules Committee without explanation or further action.

A proposal amending the Alaska Constitution to modify the number of members on the Alaska Judicial Council and the manner in which they are selected was introduced by Sen. Pete Kelly.

SJR 21 would have increased the seats from seven to ten by adding three selected by the governor and granted Legislative approval over three existing seats for attorneys selected by the state bar.

The resolution would extend legislative influence over nine of the ten seats, with the majority of those seated to be picked by the governor. This would be an excursion from the current and balanced council to select judges that has served Alaska since statehood.

SJR 21 also appeared briefly on the Senate Floor Calendar, though Sen. Kelly withdrew the resolution when the outcome did not appear favorable.

As always, the outcome of elections determines the priorities of our Legislature. Your ASEA PAC will announce recommendations soon for 2014 legislative candidates in the upcoming primary and General elections based on questionnaire responses and voting record.

You play an important role in casting your vote for candidates who support public employees and the services they provide to Alaskans.

Election Day for the primary races and SB 21 Repeal ('Vote Yes' campaign) is Tuesday, Aug. 19. The General Election is Tuesday, Nov. 4. Some voting districts have changed since the last election, so check your voter status.

If you are not registered to vote, please do so immediately to participate in first step of the legislative process—choosing lawmakers!