



ALASKA STATE EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees Local 52

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 30, 2023

MEDIA CONTACT:

Samantha Harris: samanthah@afscmelocal.52.org | (907) 750-3224

ASEA/AFSCME LOCAL 52 ANNOUNCES HEIDI DRYGAS AS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*Former Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development and Lt. Governor Candidate
to Take Helm of Union Serving 8,000 Public Employees*

JUNEAU, AK – After an extensive search, the ASEA Executive Board is excited to name lifelong labor leader Heidi Drygas as the union’s new executive director.

“My commitment to public service runs deep,” Heidi Drygas said. “My mother was a cook at the Fairbanks Pioneer Home and my father was a city firefighter. My personal connection to public service, experience in labor law, and time serving as Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development have prepared me to advocate for the thousands of Alaskans who work essential yet often underappreciated jobs in service to their state and community.”

“I have had a front row seat to every challenge and success for Alaska public employees since being elected union president in 2016,” said ASEA President Dawn Bundick, a 38-year state employee. “We need a leader who can hit the ground running, and that leader is Heidi Drygas. I want to thank our Executive Board for all their work throughout this process – we are all very excited for all our members to see her in action and get to know her and work alongside with her,” President Bundick shared.

ASEA Executive Board Treasurer Chuck Stewart, a 22-year state employee, shared: “I have no doubt that Heidi will serve ASEA members well. She has demonstrated throughout her career that she understands the issues public employees face and she is well equipped to serve our membership in this leadership role. We really are very lucky.”

When asked about her top priorities, Drygas said: “Recruitment and retention of qualified employees is paramount. The interruption of critical public services due to personnel shortages is threatening the health and safety of Alaskans. The most recent example of this crisis has contributed to the SNAP backlog at the Division of Public Assistance, which demands immediate attention. We need to renew the practices and policies that strengthen the public workforce, such as updating geographic differentials and classification studies, which ensure the state and other public employers offer attractive benefits and pay in line with the cost of living. In short, we need to begin rebuilding the state’s largest bargaining unit through attractive benefits, living wages, and—with the Legislature’s help—restoring a defined benefit retirement to support public service careers in Alaska.”

Ms. Drygas’ first day will be Wednesday, February 8. She will work out of the Juneau office and continue to engage in the Southeast activities she has come to love including fair-weather dog walks, kayaking, fishing, and foraging for wild edibles with her husband Kevin Sund and daughter Olive.

ASEA/AFSCME Local 52 is an affiliate of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). AFSCME represents more than 1.4 million public service workers across the country. AFSCME Local 52 is the largest union of state and municipal public service workers in Alaska with more than 8,000 hardworking public employees. ASEA members provide essential services that Alaskans rely on every day. They work everywhere Alaska needs them and keep Alaska running!

###