

APEA/AFT Newsletter

April 9, 2024
Volume 1, Issue 1



Welcome to APEA-AFT's latest Newsletter!

Get ready to stay in the loop with all the latest updates, events, and important news related to our union. As always our team is determined to bringing you the most informative and engaging content possible. We hope you find this newsletter to be both helpful and useful.

If you have any feedback or suggestions, please don't hesitate to reach out to us!

Southcentral

The recent developments within various associations have paved the way for improved conditions and benefits. The Kenai Borough Employees Association (KBEA) successfully negotiated an agreement, resulting in a substantial increase of 6% in the first year, followed by 3% increments in the subsequent two years. Meanwhile, Seward Public Employees Association (SPEA) implemented a Letter of Agreement (LOA) that not only provides marginal pay increases but also expands their pay scale, aiming to enhance retention by offering competitive compensation. In a commitment to employee well-being, the Matanuska Susitna Borough Employees Association (MSBEA) introduced an LOA centered around a wellness initiative, ensuring members enjoy contractually guaranteed benefits such as trail passes, gym memberships, and subscriptions to wellness programs. Furthermore, the Anchorage Early Intervention Occupations Union (AEIOU) negotiated an LOA that brings about significant positive changes, offering pay increases ranging from 15% to 30%, demonstrating the commitment to the prosperity and satisfaction of their members. These agreements reflect a collective effort to prioritize the welfare and professional development of the association members.

Northern Region

The Fairbanks North Star Borough Employees Association (FNSBEA) Local #6125 has been engaged in on-going negotiations with the Fairbanks North Star Borough since October of last year. After 22 collective bargaining sessions, bargaining team members, (David Bates, Jeana Appling, Stefany Pearson, Matt Pearson, Paul Sather, President Rita Heselton and Chief Negotiator Michael Koskie) are hopeful that the end is in sight. The main issues holding up the contract so far are unnecessary health care increases and employee safety concerns.

In the Fall, City of Nome Employees Association (Local#6141) and the Nome Joint Utility Employees Association (Local 6138) will soon start the process of preparing for negotiations. The State Supervisory Unit (Local 4900) and Chapter Chair Andrea Quintyne welcomes new Rep. Rodney Thomas located in Bethel. Alaska Higher Education Crafts & Trades Employees (Local 660) under President Charles Silva had an Executive Board Meeting on February 28th and are watching proposed health care issues. The Northern Region would like to give kudo's to United Academics Adjuncts (Local 6054) Board Member Joey Pavia-Jones for a great recruitment effort in bringing in new members from the South-central area.

Southeast

The Juneau Mental Health Professionals (JMHP) recently inked a groundbreaking 3-year agreement that assures guaranteed raises annually, coupled with enhanced protection in disciplinary matters. Meanwhile, Juneau Education Support Staff (JESS) summer workers successfully filed and resolved a noteworthy Class Action grievance, marking a significant victory for the workforce. In a parallel development, the Petersburg Municipal Employees Association (PMEA) secured a 3-year agreement introducing fresh avenues for pay increments, including a substantial 3% raise in the first year, additional leave entitlements, and community perks such as a complimentary boat launch permit annually. Efforts were also made to address concerns related to Payroll Staff through the Confidential Employees Association (CEA). On the organizational front, both Petersburg District Support Personnel (PDSP) Supervisor Unit (SU) and Ketchikan Gateway Borough (KGBEA) welcomed new leaders, with President Jesse Birchell being welcomed at PDSP, President Jesse Slone taking the helm at SU, and President Ken Montero, along with a new Vice President and Employee Rep Scott Hildebrandt, assuming leadership roles at KGBEA. Change is on the horizon, ushering in a new era for these unions under the guidance of their dynamic leadership.



Upcoming Events By Region

Juneau

Work Place Bullying

April 9th

Union 101

Aug 20th - Aug 21st

ER 2

Oct 9th - Oct 10th

Anchorage

Work Place Bullying

April 24th

June 26th

Union 101

Aug 6th - Aug 7th

ER 1

Sept 12th - Sept 13th

Union 101

Sept 24th - Sept 25th

ER 1

Oct 3rd - Oct 4th

ER 2

Oct 7th - Oct 8th

Fairbanks

Union 101

Aug 27th - Aug 28th

ER 1

Sept 19th - Sept 20th

Caucus

Oct 24th - Oct 25th

Contact your Regional Office with any questions on how to get signed up and how to use Union leave (check your local's contract)



VISIT
US



APEA-AFT Member Highlight

Matanuska Susitna Borough Employee Association



Brandon Goentzel is a relatively new Employee Representative for the Mat-Su Borough Employee's Association (MSBEA), having stepped up as a representative in April of 2023 for the Fire and Fleet Maintenance Department of the Mat-Su Borough. Brandon, who's knowledge of the unique challenges that are presented to 56-hour fire service employees,

has done a tremendous job in organizing the Fire Department and both communicating and addressing the problems that arise for Bargaining Unit Members. The time Brandon has voluntarily dedicated to serving the membership of MSBEA has been evident, and greatly appreciated.

Thank you, Brandon!

Miguel's Word

This has been a significant year on the political organizing front at APEA/AFT, and the labor movement overall. While fighting for wages, benefits and working conditions are the meat and potatoes of your local the political work we do is critical to protecting those rights because the funding available to bargain, the benefits public employers offer, and even the right to negotiate itself is largely dictated by the financial and political decisions of elected leaders. The legendary Walter Reuther who led the United Autoworkers through some of its greatest years of success expressed this aptly, "There's a direct relationship between the ballot box and the bread box, and what the union fights for and wins at the bargaining table can be taken away in the legislative halls."

That's not a cop out, it's a mandate.

To meet this challenge APEA/AFT continue to tell member stories reiterating the contributions you make to the state, and in an increasingly cynical time to underscore the value of public service itself.

Through public testimony, letters to the editor, and one on one visits our members are working hard to build relationships with state, local government, and school district officials.

In the past year APEA/AFT members have been critical in advocating for improvements to retirement security through a defined benefit pension and advocated for long overdue education funding. Our members have raised the alarm about the ongoing and worsening recruitment and retention crisis in the public sector and have actively brought forward solutions to solve these problems.



During this legislative session our goal has been to ensure that the funding and policy direction of the state places our members and their locals in the best position possible to bargain strong contracts and provide for their families. We do that by monitoring and engaging in the budget process and weighing in on bills, and administrative actions. All of the work we do relies on the engagement of an informed and active membership – that's you!

If you would like to get more involved in protecting the hard fought victories that you and your predecessors in APEA/AFT have won please email me at mrohrbacher@apea-aft.org with the subject line "legislative updates."

- Miguel Rohrbacher

APEA-AFT

Business Manager's Report

In the face of the ever-evolving workplaces and economies, the Alaska Public Employees Association is providing strength, resilience and remains a cornerstone of Alaska workers rights and advocacy. Winter is always a busy time for union activities and this year is no exception.

Staff and union leaders are bargaining successor contracts for APEA's largest unions – State Supervisors, Anchorage school district locals TOTEM and ACE, and Fairbanks NorthStar Borough Employees Association. Collectively, these local unions represent over 65 percent of APEA's total membership.

The stakes are high as massive cost of living increases following COVID have resulted in members' paychecks providing less buying power. Recruitment and retention of public employees has also come to the forefront. News articles about government services suffering due to lack of staff have become commonplace with overall vacancy rates in government jobs over 17 percent on average.

School districts are struggling to attract staff and a lack of funding increases have left districts with few options other than closing schools; and little money is left to increase wages.

Fortunately, many lawmakers are on our side and APEA's political influencers are working diligently on issues that will help our workers. As a founding member of the Alaska Public Pension Coalition, APEA has assumed a central role in bringing back a defined benefit retirement system for all Alaska public employees.

Senate Bill 88 passed the State Senate early in the legislative session and there's hope to find passage in the State House. APEA is also working to increase the Base Student Allocation (SB140) which hasn't been adjusted since 2017.

March 14, 2024, our Governor Dunleavy vetoed a comprehensive education legislation but there are high hopes that the package will be revived in a manner that the governor will approve.

Today, unions around the country are facing new challenges with the rise of the gig economy and the use of artificial intelligence in the workplace. However, they are adapting and innovating to meet these challenges head-on. Unions are negotiating for gig workers, who often lack the traditional protections afforded to full-time employees. Unions are also addressing the use of AI in monitoring and managing workers, ensuring that technology is used ethically and does not infringe on workers' rights.

As the landscape of work shifts beneath our feet, the role and strength of labor unions are more pertinent than ever. Once the backbone of the industrial workforce, unions have seen its influence wane in the face of globalization, technological change, and employer concentration. Yet, despite these challenges, unions continue to play a crucial role in advocating for workers' rights and shaping a more equitable economy.

The strength of our unions depends on the ability to unite workers and speak with a collective voice. As the nature of work continues to change, APEA-AFT will remain an essential force in ensuring that progress does not come at the expense of the worker.

- Jeff Kasper

★ ★ APEA/AFT (AFL-CIO)



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