

Dear RPEA Members,

As 2017 comes to a close, the RPEA Executive Board would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year!

We are grateful for the support of all of our members, and will continue to work to protect and defend retirement benefits, building on our successes and accomplishments of 2017. To name a few:

- **Retiree Health Plan Advisory Board**

RPEA worked and fought hard for many years for the creation of this Board. The Board is finally a reality, and is scheduled to be implemented within a few weeks.

The State controlled the final Board design, which ended up being different from the design that RPEA and the state negotiated and originally agreed to, particularly in terms of true retiree representation. RPEA will continue to take steps to move toward a Board that more effectively represents retirees.

- **Declaratory Relief Lawsuit**

RPEA succeeded in winning a partial summary judgment in the first part of this lawsuit, establishing that optional health benefits offered at the time of retirement such as DVA, LTC and optional life insurance are **constitutionally protected** – just like the medical insurance benefit is. This legal victory enables RPEA to work towards restoring the dental plan to its 2013 benefit levels.

The trial to establish that our dental plan was diminished on January 1, 2014 is scheduled for April 2018. Between now and April, RPEA's Retiree Benefits Committee will spend every available moment working with Susan Orlansky in preparation of the trial. Susan is the attorney RPEA hired to represent all of us in this lawsuit. She has done a very impressive job of expertly presenting this case to the court, winning a partial summary judgment that many said could never be won.

- **Increased Membership**

RPEA's significantly increased membership in the past 2 years has allowed us to continue to do the work necessary to protect and defend earned, constitutionally protected retirement benefits. RPEA's only sources of revenue are memberships and donations to the RPEA legal fund. Without these vitally important memberships and legal fund donations, RPEA could not continue to protect retiree benefits.

Donations to the RPEA legal fund are dedicated exclusively to legal expenses. Anyone wishing to make a donation can do it by credit card by going to the RPEA website or by mailing a check to RPEA, 3310 Arctic Blvd., Ste. 200, Anchorage, AK 99503.

RPEA website link: <http://www.rpea.apea-aft.org/>

• **Housekeeping**

The Executive Board has made some significant strides in internally strengthening the organization so it can continue to grow and be as strong and viable as possible as we move into the future:

- a. *Hiring of an accounting firm*—this step gives RPEA a level of accountability it has not had in the past, protecting assets as well as those responsible for those assets.
- b. *Bylaws revisions*—the RPEA Bylaws Committee and Executive Board worked for several months, spending countless hours, reviewing outdated bylaws and updating where necessary to allow the organization to remain strong and productive. The membership's overwhelming support and 'yes' votes (99% of those voting) tell us that the revisions were necessary and are supported by those the Executive Board serves.
- c. *Increased membership communication*—Since taking the president's seat in 2015, one priority has been to increase the frequency of timely information sent to members. Although we will continue the time-consuming process of creating periodic newsletters, they don't address the need for timely information that a newsletter cannot accommodate.

*We hope that everyone has a safe and Happy New Year,
and we look forward to working with you in 2018!*

Sharon Hoffbeck, President

Brad Owens, Executive Vice President

Kris Warren, Secretary,

Gene Furman, Treasurer,

Margaret King, Communications Director

Bob Grove, Legislative Director

Cammy Taylor, Medical Information Director

Jeff Goldsmith, Membership Director

John George, SE Chapter Chair

Clark Milne, NR Chapter Chair

Fran Rabago, SC Chapter Chair