

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK by Sam Trivette, RPEA President

### Alaska Public Pension Coalition

The APPC just completed its last meeting in mid-May. Members discussed its successes in the 2008 legislative session and goals it hoped to reach later this year. A number of ideas were generated on continuing to educate the public and legislators on public pension and health care issues. Most APPC member organizations have specific tasks they are working on for the upcoming months. If any of you have suggestions on how to better frame or promote the return to a defined benefit program, please let RPEA know. The next APPC meeting is scheduled for the middle of August. We will report the status of APPC's efforts after that meeting.

### New RPEA President

After serving as Vice President and President of RPEA for about eight years, I'm relinquishing my position as President as of July 2008. I consider it a great honor to have been elected by RPEA members for four consecutive terms to serve you. We are all fortunate RPEA has a very strong, effective Executive Board that has been an enormous help in running RPEA in recent years. Your Nominating Committee has found a competent, dedicated member willing to take over the leadership of RPEA. In our next

newsletter, we will provide you with some background on the president-elect. I greatly appreciate all your support, your communications and your help during the past eight years.

### Alaska Commission On Aging Teleconference

The ACoA conducted its last teleconference meeting of this past legislative session on April 17, 2008. Gary Miller and I both attended. Amanda Makki from Sen. Murkowski's office discussed Medicare, Medicaid and touched on a number of health related issues. She also spoke of recently passed legislation that affects seniors.

Makki said the Senate understands that Medicare and Medicaid have serious problems at this point. She said all Senate health care issue staffers are working daily on these issues. She believes the Senate will arrive at a compromise fix before July.

She gave a brief history of the payment of Medicare rates. Their expectation is that Medicare reimbursement rates will rise by about 0.5% to 11% in July 2008. At this time, unless new legislation is enacted, reimbursement rates are expected to decrease by 10.6% in July 2008, and by another 10% in January 2009. If the rate does go up by as much as 11%, the costs would be about \$8.5 Billion. "Offsets" would need to be found elsewhere in the budget. President Bush has threatened to veto the legislation if offsets aren't included.

Many senators acknowledge there needs to be a permanent fix to the formula so these issues aren't on the table year after year. There has been lots of talk about how Medicare Advantage is much more expensive than Medicare, but that is not an issue for us living in Alaska. Amanda says most folks are very happy with the speed of Medicare payments, usually not more than two weeks, if doctors file electronically.

### Please Return Your Ballot

RPEA recently sent out ballots for the upcoming election of Executive Board members. Included on the voting ballot are proposed changes to the RPEA by-laws. All bylaw changes require the approval of a majority of RPEA's voting members. Please vote and return the ballot by the deadline to make your voice heard.



She also talked about broad topics such as "universal insurance" and how that would affect those that have employer-provided insurance (which are most employees in Alaska), "who are the uninsured and why", the impact of drug importation if it were allowed, and more.

Medicare, Medicaid and insurance problems in general are complex and not easy to resolve. But it was somewhat reassuring to hear of the efforts being put forth by the Senate to help find answers or, at least, some assistance to seniors.

The second focus of the teleconference was to discuss legislation that passed that had an impact on seniors. As I've noted before ACoA tracks a wide range of issues that can help or hurt seniors. The list of passed legislation is lengthy so I will refer you to the May issue of the *Senior Voice* in which their staff has done an excellent job summarizing the legislation, mostly those that did pass, but a few items that didn't.

### Decline those catalogs

This month's AARP magazine contained a tip for smart consumers regarding the catalogs mailed to almost all Americans. These 19 billion catalogs consume 3.6 million tons of paper and 53 million trees every year. Cathie Gandel reported how CatalogChoice, a new online service, will tell merchants to remove your name from their mailing lists. The service is free; just log onto [www.catalogchoice.org](http://www.catalogchoice.org), sign in and start declining to receive the catalogs of your choice by mail. It's a good thing.

### Summer Office Hours

From May through August this year the RPEA office will be staffed from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.



## Southeast Chapter

by Gary Miller

Our guest speakers in May were Representative Andrea Doll and Senator Kim Elton. Representative Beth Kerttula was south with her mom who was getting medical tests – the results of which were good.

Andrea said the capital move was killed this session but will come up again next year. She pointed out that more money was budgeted for roads and ferries. She also spoke of the energy crisis currently affecting Juneau and how it is hitting state workers hard. She noted that state workers' wages are too low and when you can't afford energy costs, you can't afford many other things. Andrea told us that three letters have been sent to Governor Palin concerning the power disaster facing Juneau. As of our meeting time the Governor had not yet responded. Governor Palin is not communicating with the power company or the City and Borough of Juneau. Andrea said that the criteria for a disaster declaration still have not been given to our Juneau delegation and she expressed frustration over it.

Senator Elton noted that in his 14 years as a legislator this was the best year. He said that Juneau has a dream team with our three legislators. He said that the three of them were in constant contact on every bit of legislation. In addition, the coalition in the senate meant that more time was spent on issues rather than politicking. He also noted that more money was put into schools and the health centers and money was put into savings from the surplus to the tune of \$5 Billion.

## Northern Region Chapter

by Charlie Gallagher

Many thanks to Mary Zalar and Doris Robbins who have participated very actively on RPEA's Statewide Medical and Legislative committees. Even though the Northern Region Chapter has few resources to support regional sub committees due to our far flung membership, Mary and Doris are taking the challenge and doing an excellent job!

Almost all of the RPEA Executive Committee's work takes place in Juneau and Anchorage. Once a year in September, the Alaska Retirement Management

Board meets in Fairbanks. It is important for us to make our presence known there, as we did last year, to support the efforts of our Executive Board. To the best of my knowledge only RPEA and NEA had retiree testimony last September.

Specifically my testimony at the Investment sub-committee hearing involved the extraordinary high management fees charged some Tier 4 employees for managing their contributions. This did NOT fall on deaf ears.

The next morning Mary Zalar welcomed the ARM Board to Fairbanks on behalf of RPEA and discussed the consideration for Alaska Retirement and Benefits to initiate a wellness program. That issue, also, did NOT fall on deaf ears.

Doris Robbins spoke about a terrible concern for all seniors: the lack of doctors taking Medicare patients. It is a disaster when one cannot find a doctor except at the door of the Emergency Room!

Along with Judith Strohmaier and Alfred Frey we had a robust presence at the ARM Board. If you are in Fairbanks in September I encourage you to come, sign in, and participate. Numbers count!

My greatest concern this year has been to reach our far flung members, though, even with a January blizzard, our lunch attendance has increased. We have outgrown our current meeting place and Judith Strohmaier has arranged for us to return to **The Princess Hotel** where we will have a private room. **The meeting day will be changed to the third Wednesday of the month at 12:30 p.m. with speakers at 1 p.m.**

We are running a NR membership promotion in the next couple of months. Phase one simply involves you, our Northern Region members, asking your friends, associates and former colleagues to join us. Please encourage friends to join you in RPEA, and please let me know when you are successful.



### RPEA

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### RPEA Executive Board

President: Sam Trivette  
Exec. Vice-President: Jay Dulany  
Treasurer: Carol Earnhart  
Secretary: Beverly Simmons  
VP NR Reg: Charles Gallagher  
VP SC Reg: Bob Madigan  
VP SE Reg: Gary Miller  
Legislative Affairs Dir: Kurt Fredriksson  
Medical Information Dir: Pat Kennedy  
Membership Dir: Linda Dalton  
Communications Dir: Greg Wilkinson

### Important Phone Numbers

#### Premiera Blue Cross:

Anchorage: 258-5065

Seattle, (877) 762-9597

#### Retirement & Benefits:

Juneau, 465-4460 or (800) 821-2251

### Meeting Schedule

**Southeast Chapter:** First Thursday each month, 11:30 a.m., Prospector Hotel

**Southcentral Chapter:** Second Tuesday each month, 11:30 a.m., Anchorage Senior Activity Center

**Northern Chapter:** Third Wednesday each month, 12:30 p.m., Princess Hotel

**RPEA Executive Board:** Third Tuesday each month, 10:00 a.m., Anchorage APEA/AFT Field Office (via teleconference) 274-1720

Check out our website at <http://rpea.apea-aft.org>

RPEA NEWS is published in-house. Contact the editors through the RPEA Office.

## Southcentral Chapter

by Bob Madigan

### Our April Speaker Warns About Invasive Plants.

Jamie Nielsen, Invasive Plant Instructor for the Cooperative Extension Service of the University of Alaska Fairbanks, told RPEA members that Alaska is beginning to be damaged by invasive weeds. These are plants transplanted to an ecosystem where their natural biological checks and balances are not present. For example, Spotted Knapwood, which has caused significant damage in Montana, is now found in several sites around

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# RPEA NEWS

Retired Public Employees of Alaska  
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### Protecting & Enhancing Your Retirement Years

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state by contacting your state government housing office.

Talk to a housing counselor. If you are a union member, you can call the Union Plus Save My Home Hotline, at 1/866/490-5361 or go to <http://www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/hcc/hcs.cfm> to find a HUD-approved housing counselor in your state.

Be on the lookout for scams. If any company or individual promises they can stop your foreclosure immediately if you sign a document appointing them to act on your behalf, you may well be signing over the title to your property and becoming a renter in your own home. Never sign a legal document without reading and understanding all the terms and getting professional advice from an attorney, a trusted real estate professional or a certified housing counselor.

Set some spending priorities. Review your budget to see where you can cut spending to find the extra cash you need for your mortgage payment.

— Courtesy AFT Retiree e-News, May 2008



#### State of Alaska Legislative Special Airfares

Alaska Airlines and the Alaska Committee have once again teamed up to offer Alaska residents an exclusive discounted round-trip airfare to Alaska's capital—this time during the Summer 2008 special legislative session. You can redeem this discount as a Discount Code at [alaskaair.com](http://alaskaair.com) and save 40 percent off three-day advance purchase fares on travel to Juneau. These discounts are valid for travel May 31 through July 7, 2008. To take advantage of this offer, enter the unique, single-use Discount Code **EC03808QQN006378** into the Discount Code box when making reservations at [alaskaair.com](http://alaskaair.com) by July 7, 2008.

If you have an account on AlaskaAir.com, sign in and under My Discount Codes, click View My Discount Codes. The 40% special discount code should be visible and available for Alaska residents to use.

#### Attention Alaska Snowbirds!

Do you head south for the winter for sun and fun and come back to Alaska in the summer for the same? Give RPEA your addresses and the month you will arrive at each place and we will automatically keep your address current in our database. This will ensure that you get the RPEA NEWS and other important information for retirees in a timely manner. Email the office at [rpea@alaska.net](mailto:rpea@alaska.net) or call (907) 274-1703 or (800) 478-9992 and we will make sure you are kept informed.

