

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

by Bob Doll



NOT VOTING IS A MISDEMEANOR

Or, it ought to be. Legally, I mean. It is certainly a misdemeanor toward our fellow citizens. How?

Well, let me start with RPEA. We as a group spend considerable time and our membership dues dollars in attempting to determine what are priority issues and which candidates for office might support our views. But if we don't act on the information we've obtained, what's the point of our making the effort? And if we don't try to convince others to vote in support of the candidates that we've chosen, we are undermining our own interests.

As for the rest of our local, state, and national community, who should understand better than we the influence that elected officials can have on how government business is conducted? Whatever we, or our friends, gripe about is something that can probably be changed or mitigated at some level, local through national. And I like to begin my letters or remarks to an elected official by inserting something like "I have voted in the last (number) elections in (city/state/US)." It helps to focus attention on what I have to say.

And as we shuffle mentally through all of the issues that may be important to us, I hope our membership will keep in mind the reason our Association exists. We have rather specific concerns and those relate to how the State of Alaska manages its financial affairs and how it treats its employees and retirees. So I hope that a little voice in our subconscious will remind us:

"Support your hobby,
but vote your pension."

Employee Political Information Committee

by Sam Trivette

Every two years, public employee groups spend more time paying attention to politics. We all learned years ago that as much as we might dislike it, many, many decisions affecting current and retired public employees are impacted or even controlled by those elected to represent us. So decades ago, our active employee affiliate, APEA, established the Employee Political Information Committee [EPIC]. EPIC makes candidate endorsements and provides campaign contributions.

EPIC Board members are nominated from APEA locals and elected at APEA's biennial caucus. Jay Dulany and I have been RPEA's alternate and representative for the last several years and we were just reelected at the September 2008 caucus. Before making endorsements and providing contributions, EPIC looks at a number of factors. First, EPIC sends to the candidates questionnaires which ask timely questions about public employee benefits and legislation and retiree issues as well. Then EPIC carefully reviews the responses. For candidates that are incumbents, voting records are carefully checked. Other labor friends are consulted as well as labor leaders. In cooperation with local Central Labor Councils, EPIC helps interview candidates for local, statewide and national office. EPIC's Board of Directors then makes candidate endorsements and provides political contributions to help candidates get elected. Another key EPIC responsibility is to provide the results of this process to our members. That is the purpose of this article.

EPIC now has a web site that provides a list of names of candidates it supports at the local and State level, based upon the criteria noted above, irrespective of a candidate's party affiliation. And there are other web sites of our affiliates and friends that also provide candidate information. Our hope is to get our members to understand how important it is to get the facts on candidates and to understand candidate positions and their votes on issues affect-

What is the Truth?

by Greg Wilkinson



Do the sound bites in today's political speeches cause you to raise an eyebrow? Are the news reports in this political season making you a skeptic? Well, now you can find out just what is the truth on the website FactCheck.org.

www.FactCheck.org is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, "consumer advocate" for voters that aims to reduce the level of deception and confusion in U.S. politics. It monitors the factual accuracy of what is said by major U.S. political players in the form of TV ads, debates, speeches, interviews, and news releases. Its goal is to apply the best practices of both journalism and scholarship, and to increase public knowledge and understanding.

The Annenberg Political Fact Check is a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania. The APPC was established by publisher and philanthropist Walter Annenberg in 1994 to create a community of scholars within the University of Pennsylvania that would address public policy issues at the local, state, and federal levels.

The APPC accepts NO funding from business corporations, labor unions, political parties, lobbying organizations or individuals. It is funded primarily by the Annenberg Foundation.

So, if you read or hear statements about candidates that cause you to wonder, check it out on FactCheck.org. The more you know of the truth, the better choice you can make at the polls. And the better our politicians, the better our government. A good voter is a well-informed voter.

Office Notes

Summer, such as it was, is over. Office hours have returned to 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. There will be brief office closure from October 6-17, but you can continue to submit renewals and questions during that time.





Southeast Chapter

by Gary Miller, Chair

My summer has been very busy with volunteering at church, serving on the Juneau State Parks Advisory Board, serving as the RPEA Southeast Chapter chair and serving on the RPEA state executive board. On August 1st I went deer hunting and got a nice buck. I then spent the next three weeks removing my old deck from my house and building a new one using pressure treated lumber. On August 29th I went fishing with my brother Mark and caught a 103 pound halibut. Play time is good.

I am attending a family reunion in October and will spend a few days with my 85 year old mom. I am trying to line up a guest speaker for our October meeting who does home energy audits. With the current high costs for energy he may be able to save us some money.

As always, campaigns are interesting. Representative Beth Kerttula has won the primary in House District 3 and is unopposed in the general election. She has always been a strong supporter of both retirees and active workers, so I was very pleased to see her reelected. In House District 4 Representative Andrea Doll did not have an opponent in the primary but she does have Republican candidate, Cathy Munoz, running against her in the general election in November. I hope all of you speak with candidates in your areas about retiree issues and consider their stands when you vote.

Northern Region Chapter

by Charlie Gallagher, Chair

During our annual business meeting on August 28th, our vice-Chair, Judith Strohmaier, suggested we define our primary purpose in our Northern Region mission statement. It was passed that the following be added to our mission statement: "Protecting the Benefits of Alaska's Public Employees and Retirees"

It is simple, self explanatory, and borne out of necessity. When the State tried to reduce retiree health benefits in the 1990's, an RPEA lawsuit resulted. The \$500,000 lawsuit was settled in the Alaska State Supreme Court, upholding our health benefits. The outrage was the State used our PERS/TRS funds to pay for their costs. And as far as I know, it was never paid back.

The second mission statement, "Presenting Public Employees with a Face in our Communities", was derived when the Murkowski Administration eliminated the Defined Benefits System. This exacerbated the crisis to the PERS/TRS fund by precluding new employees contributions to our retirement fund and any possibility of our being 100% inflation proofed as some of us were promised. As a result, Alaska is now uncompetitive in hiring teachers and public employees. The Alaska benefit system ranking has fallen from number 1 to number 48th nationally.

It was clear to see that during legislative hearings in Fairbanks the Northern Region legislators behaved as though they were operating in a vacuum. They believed what they were told by their committee chairs. The vote came to the wire and we lost BIG. Public employees need a Face in our towns so our legislative representatives know there is a consequence to their vote. We are determined to be that Face. Although some legislators simply refuse to be affected, they will know they are being watched.

The third mission statement, "Supporting our Executive and Committees", says we support our president and our committees in the capitol. It says support comes from our members and chapters all over the State of Alaska and throughout the United States.

Finally, the last mission statement is "Providing a Forum". To me this is the most important because the forum of our monthly meetings is where we learn what is not going right. Often we have heard "health benefits are not covered," or the "contract does not include..." When one can come and explain their situation in detail, it is very helpful for us, for our members, and for our Health and Legislative Committees.

Please encourage friends to join you in RPEA, and please let us know when you are successful. Email me at cgallagher@alaska.net.

Our meetings are every third Wednesday at the Princess Hotel for lunch at 12:30 p.m. It is not only your opportunity to be heard, but our opportunity to hear you. Bring your spouse, a colleague, or a friend.

RPEA

3310 Arctic Blvd, SUITE 200
ANCHORAGE, AK 99503
274-1703 or (800) 478-9992
rpea@alaska.net

RPEA Executive Board

President: Bob Doll
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: Sam Trivette
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.

Medical Information Committee

By Sam Trivette

Thanks to all of you that responded to my article in the last RPEA NEWS. I received communication from a number of members willing to lend their expertise. Because of my extensive travel in September, I'm just starting to contact those who responded. We hope to convene a meeting by mid-November to discuss priorities, set goals and begin to discuss important issues. If you haven't yet contacted me and are interested in medical issues, please contact the RPEA office

continued on page 3



RPEA NEWS

Retired Public Employees of Alaska
3310 Arctic Blvd., Suite 200
Local 4900R APEA/AFT
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Non-profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Anchorage, AK
Permit No. 69

Address Service Requested

*Protecting & Enhancing Your
Retirement Years*

Inside This Issue:

Responses from legislative candidates to RPEA questionnaire...special section
Vote!...page 1



Page 4

Alliance Rewards For Retirees With The Write Stuff

The Letters to the Editor page is often the most widely read section of a local newspaper, and for Alliance for Retired Americans' members it is a forum to tell their stories and show how deeply they care about the issues. "Retirees with the Write Stuff" is a project of the Alliance for Retired Americans, the AFL-CIO's organization for union and community retirees, to encourage more retirees to write letters to their local newspaper. Write a Letter to the Editor to your local newspaper, giving a retiree's perspective on a local, state or national issue. If it runs, send the Alliance a copy at letters@retiredamericans.org, fax it to 202/637-5398 or mail it to Letters to the Editor, Alliance for Retired Americans, 815 16th Street N.W., Washington DC 20006. You'll receive an Alliance pen and mention in the Alliance electronic newsletter.

---From AFT Retiree e-news, September 16, 2008

EPIC *continued from page 1...*

ing public employees and retirees. We also encourage members to vote in the upcoming elections using the information they learn from EPIC.

Here are some of those other links. Go to www.epicweb.org, and click on "endorsements". Next click on our national affiliate's [American Federation of Teachers] web site, at www.aft.org. From the front page, click on "Campaign '08" for national campaign endorsements. You will be asked for your affiliate. Just type in "RPEA", hit "enter". From there, look at a number of topics, including "comparisons"; especially check out candidate stands on Economy, Health Care and Retirement. Also click on "Sen. John McCain" and "Candidate Questionnaire". It is important our members look at voting records, questionnaires, and interviews to make sure their votes are based upon facts. Understanding how much hype and misinformation abounds in the national press and in campaign ads and literature, I'd invite you to look up information on www.FactCheck.org if you have ques-

tions about candidates' real positions or the impact of those positions.

Because of the limited space in RPEA NEWS, we will be providing additional information to our members whose e-mail addresses we have prior to the November 4 elections.

Furthermore, we urge ALL RPEA members to make contributions to EPIC, to candidates who support public employee and retiree issues and to consider volunteering in campaigns for those candidates. If you live in Alaska, please contact the following people in the APEA Offices to help with campaigns: Cindy Spanyers in Juneau, Peggy Wilcox in Anchorage, Jim Orr in Fairbanks.

Reminder!

Daylight Saving Time will end on the first Sunday in November. Beginning in 2007, daylight time starts on the second Sunday in March and ends on the first Sunday in November.

