



Retired Public Employees Association

Protecting and Enhancing Your Retirement

RPEA exists to protect the rights and benefits of Alaska's retired state and municipal government employees and teachers, and to support a fiscally sound retirement system.

Help RPEA get you the information you need by sending us your email at RPEA@Alaska.Net



Annual Executive Board Elections

Nominations are now open for the annual election of executive board members for the following positions: Executive Vice President, Treasurer, Director of Legislative Affairs, and Director of Communications. These positions are 2-year terms and serve from July 1 through June 30.

Nominations may be sent (with the consent of the nominee) to Fran Rabago at <mailto:franrabago@gci.net> or RPEA, 3310 Arctic Blvd., Suite 200, Anchorage, AK 99503 (phone call nominations cannot be accepted.)

Interested candidates may nominate themselves. Nominees must provide a statement of qualifications and have agreed to run before they can be nominated. Nominations will be accepted for 45 days from the date of this newsletter. If a qualified candidate is unopposed, then the candidate will be declared elected.

Officer duties may be viewed on the RPEA website in the Statewide Executive Bylaws at <http://www.rpea.apea-aft.org/documents.html>

Message from the President

Sharon Hoffbeck

RPEA's efforts to protect retirement benefits began in 1997 when the organization was formed. Those efforts continue today as our vested, constitutionally protected benefits are, unfortunately, still at risk.

RPEA regularly attends the quarterly meetings with the Division of Retirement & Benefits and Aetna. RPEA does this on behalf of all retirees and beneficiaries to assure that all of you have a voice in protecting your retirement benefits. RPEA also regularly questions the actions of DRB and Aetna and takes action when necessary.

Currently, the Declaratory Relief DVA lawsuit that was filed by RPEA in 2016 resulted in a partial summary judgment earlier this year in RPEA's favor. The court ruled from the bench that the optional health plans offered by the state at the time of retirement (DVA, Long Term Care), are constitutionally protected just like the retiree medical plan. The trial to determine how the benefits under the dental plan were diminished when the state imposed the Moda plan in January 2014 is scheduled for February 2018. However, we hope the court will be able to decide this issue earlier by summary judgment.

If you have a dental claim for a service that was covered prior to 2014, but has been denied by Moda, we urge you to file an appeal if you still can. Appeal instructions can be found on the RPEA website: rpea.apea-aft.org. Either way, please send RPEA information about the denied claim.

NOTES FROM THE EXECUTIVE VP

Aetna and Moda Retiree Health Plan Contracts

Since 2013, RPEA has been deeply and directly involved in the changes the state imposed on the Retiree Health Care Plan in January 2014. At first, its efforts were directed toward trying to convince DOA the changes were unnecessary and improper. Then, to explaining how the changes diminished these protected benefits. Eventually, it assisted in challenging the avalanche of claims denied by Aetna and Moda that were covered before the 2014 changes. Finally, after exhausting reasonable efforts, RPEA went to court to protect the dental benefits diminished under the Moda plan.

In the lawsuit filed by RPEA challenging the imposition of the Moda dental plan in 2014, the court has already ruled that a retiree's optional health benefits offered at the time of retirement are legally protected from diminishment or impairment – just like the medical benefits. We believe the court will ultimately require the state to reinstate the dental benefits that were provided under the former plan. Although a trial date is set for February 2018, we believe the court will enter a final order before then.

RPEA is close to exhausting its options and efforts to address the significant changes made by DOA to the medical plan. It is unfortunate DRB seems unable, or unwilling, to fulfill its duties as the fiduciary and administrator of these health plans. While RPEA has been patient and persistent in trying to find administrative and legislative solutions, DOA has been content to delay making any meaningful changes. Sadly, the time for talk is ending and RPEA must again look to the courts to make the state faithfully and legally perform its duties as the fiduciary and administrator of our health care plans.

Please provide RPEA with your email address. When you do this you help us reduce our operating costs, such as copying and postage, allowing us to use our limited resources to protect benefits for you and other retirees.

Thank You!

AETNA'S NATIONAL ADVANTAGE PROGRAM (NAP)

By Sharon Hoffbeck

Aetna's National Advantage Program (NAP) is a provider network program that is available for providers who do not want to join Aetna's regular network, but do want to participate by offering certain treatments/services at reduced rates. Providers participating in the NAP program can pick and choose which treatments/services they want to offer at reduced rates, whereas a provider who is in Aetna's regular network offers all treatments/services at the negotiated network rates.

The benefit to the retiree who goes to a NAP provider versus a provider who does not participate in any of Aetna's networks is that the services the provider offers at a reduced NAP rate will be treated as if they were in the regular Aetna network. This means the provider will not be allowed to balance bill you---balance billing is when the provider charges you the difference between the provider's regular fee and what AlaskaCare will pay for that particular treatment/service.

If a provider is in Aetna's regular network, all of the treatments/services that a provider offers will be protected against balance billing. Under the NAP program, only some of the treatments/services a provider offers will be network rates and protected from balance billing. If your provider is a NAP provider, it is important to ask if a treatment will be covered under the NAP program—you cannot assume it will be.

It was recently reported to RPEA that Aetna's NAP program was no longer in effect. This was a rumor that is not correct. The NAP program is still in place.

LONG TERM CARE APPEALS

By Sharon Hoffbeck

RPEA has recently become aware that the Division of Retirement and Benefits has been misquoting the appeal rights for plan holders of the Long Term Care plans (LTC).

DRB was not aware that all retirees have the right to appeal a Long Term Care claim denial to the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) as set in Alaska statute, telling retirees that DRB's decision was the final step.

If you have tried to appeal a LTC claim denial or been refused benefits, and were told you could not appeal beyond the Division of Retirement & Benefits, please let us know as soon as possible.

Find out what RPEA's Southeast, Northern and Southcentral Chapters are doing and how you can get involved at:

RPEA On-Line: <http://www.rpea.apea-aft.org>

Retired Public Employees of Alaska

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On January 1, 2014, the State of Alaska began implementing a long-range plan with the specific purpose to reduce retiree health benefits. It did so despite knowing these health benefits are protected from diminishment by the Alaska Constitution and reaffirmed by a decision from the Alaska Supreme Court. Fighting these changes has been—and is—RPEA's top priority — And we need your help.

You can help RPEA by:

- ✓ Becoming or sustaining your RPEA membership – for 2017 fees are \$35.
- ✓ Telling your retiree or soon-to-be retiree friends about RPEA and encouraging them to become members.
- ✓ Donate to RPEA's legal fund.
- ✓ Attend and participate in your local RPEA Chapter.
- ✓ Provide RPEA details if you have a claim denied and believe it should've been paid. Please contact RPEA's President, Sharon Hoffbeck at sharonhoffbeck@gmail.com (907) 274-1703.



CONTACT INFORMATION

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