



President's Message

Although summer has been in full swing, the RPEA Executive Board sacrificed a lot of sunny days and continued to work on projects critical to all retirees – protecting and safeguarding earned, constitutionally protected State of Alaska retiree benefits.

The Dental/Vision/Audio (DVA) Declaratory Relief Lawsuit is scheduled for trial in February 2018, requiring significant preparation during the months leading up to trial day. Just to recap – in January 2017 RPEA was granted a partial summary judgment, the court ruling from the bench that the optional health plans offered retirees at the time of retirement (DVA, Long-Term Care and optional life) are constitutionally protected just like the medical health plan.

The trial is to determine how much of the DVA plan can be restored to its 2013 benefit levels. Regardless of whether you retired before the DVA lawsuit was filed or after, the court ruling will apply to all who purchase DVA insurance.

RPEA has also continued to work with the administration toward establishing a Retiree Health Plans Advisory Board—a project we have been actively engaged in with

the administration since 2013. We have come to agreement about the structure and function of the Board more than once in that time-period, but the administration never quite followed through with its commitments for implementation.

The Retiree Health Plans Advisory Board, once implemented, will again give retirees a seat and voice at the table concerning their retirement benefits. Retirees' voices were silenced in 2006 when the PERS/TRS Boards were abolished by then Governor Murkowski, giving the administration complete control of the fate of retirement benefits.

RPEA has always been a strong advocate for retirees, and as of 2006 we stepped in, to become the voice that the administration attempted to silence.

We continue to closely monitor how the administration is managing retiree benefits, and we continue to stand strong when necessary to protect those benefits.

The good news is that we recently had a meeting with the administration, and have been assured once again that the Board is on the near horizon.

We will keep you informed about RPEA's progress!

RPEA Member Spotlight

During the last legislative session, proposed budget cuts for the Alaska Pioneer Homes would have closed the Wasilla and Juneau homes.



Residents would have been uprooted and transferred to one of the remaining Pioneer Homes, denying them the support of family and friends and others, by moving them out of their communities.

After a tremendous show of support from those valuing the Alaska Pioneer Homes and what they stand for, the Legislature made the right decision allowing all homes to remain open.

One of those dedicated people who helped fight this battle is Gordon Severson, who was recently appointed by Governor Walker to serve on the Alaska Pioneer Homes Advisory Board. His 4- year appointment began on July 1, 2017.

Gordon is a very dedicated RPEA member, having retired from DOT&PF, he joined RPEA in 1996—the year it was founded—his membership number is #8!

Thank you Gordon!

RPEA

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RPEA Executive Board

President: Sharon Hoffbeck

Executive Vice-President: Brad Owens

Secretary: Kris Warren

Treasurer: Gene Furman

Communications Director: Margaret King

Membership Director: Jeff Goldsmith

Legislative Director: Bob Grove

Northern Region Vice-President: Clark Milne

Southeast Vice-President: John George

Southcentral Vice-President: Fran Rabago

Important Phone Numbers

Aetna's Health Concierge: (855) 784-8646

Moda Health/Delta Dental: (855) 784-8646

CHCS (LTC): (888) 287-7116

Retirement & Benefits, Juneau
(907) 465-4460 or (800) 821-2251

Meeting Schedule

Northern Region:

Third Thursday each month, 12:30 pm
at Raven Landing

Southeast Chapter:

Second Thursday, September – May
11:30 am St. Paul's Church

Southcentral Chapter:

Second Tuesday Sept, Dec, March, June
11:30 am Anchorage Senior Activity Center

RPEA Executive Board

Third Tuesday each month, 10 am
Anchorage APEA/AFT Field Office
(via teleconference) 274-1720

Contact the editors through the RPEA office.

Executive Board Election Results

Fran Rabago, Chair Nominations Committee

This year's election results are based on the unopposed nominations of qualified members for the positions of Executive Vice-President, Director of Legislative Information, Director of Communications, and Treasurer. At the August 15, 2017 Executive Board meeting, the following were appointed for a two-year term ending June 30, 2019:

Executive Vice President

Brad Owens

Legislative Information Director

Bob Grove

Communications Director

Margaret King

Treasurer

Eugene Furman

RPEA would like to thank Brad, Bob and Margaret for their continued support and service to all State of Alaska retirees!

Bylaws Vote

Fran Rabago, Chair Bylaws Committee

After a year of careful deliberation by the Bylaws Committee and Executive Board, the bylaws were amended and put out for a vote to all members in good standing. The unprecedented response was phenomenal with more than a third of RPEA's members voting on the proposed changes. A breakdown of the vote is as follows:

PASS: 2,079

DO NOT PASS: 94

The ballots were counted by nine RPEA member volunteers, and managed by Sharon Baker, who has served as the long-time president of TOTEM, one of APEA's locals representing support staff for the Anchorage School District. While not a member of RPEA nor employed by APEA, Sharon is a subject-matter expert when it comes to voting and the voting process, so she was a perfect choice as the neutral overseer of the bylaws count.

Thank you to the RPEA member volunteers and Sharon Baker for your help!

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>



LONG TERM CARE UPDATE

Brad Owens, Executive Vice-President

The State of Alaska currently offers three voluntary Long Term Care plans that are available to retirees and their spouses at the time of retirement. These plans provide a range of health and social services for people who suffer from severe cognitive impairment, or who need help with the basic activities of daily living due to a chronic condition.

There are four different plans: Bronze (which was closed to new enrollment in 1999), Silver, Gold and Platinum. The benefits and coverage of each plan differ, and we encourage you to have the current booklet that describes your plan's coverage and benefits. The State may change the plans from time to time so you should review which plan you have elected and the terms of your plan.

In addition, we encourage you to notify your children, other family members or caretakers that you have elected Long Term Care coverage and which of the plans you are under. This is important so that if you have need for the benefits provided, you will be able to understand how your Long Term Care plan fits with other options and assistance, such as Medicaid or Medicare. This will help ensure you will have the long-term care you need when you are eligible for benefits.

If anyone needs a copy of the Long Term Care plan book, please contact sharonhoffbeck@gmail.com.

Tell her which plan you have and she will send it to you electronically.

Has your email address changed lately?
Please let us know- send updates to:

RPEA@alaska.net

RETIREE DEPENDENT AUDIT

Sharon Hoffbeck, President

The Retiree Dependent Audit is underway, with audit letters having been mailed July 28, 2017. The Division of Retirement & Benefits (DRB) hired HMS, an independent review organization, to conduct the audit.

The purpose of the audit is to assure that all dependents listed on a retiree's AlaskaCare health insurance plan are entitled to receive benefits, and if not, to remove them from the eligibility list. RPEA fully supports the dependent audit as it protects trust money, assuring that only those who are entitled to benefits are receiving them.

We do have some concerns, however, about how the audit is being conducted. We discussed these concerns with DRB during a recent meeting in Juneau. The two most disconcerting issues RPEA has are:

1) The turn-around time for requested documents to be received is unrealistically short, especially for the many retirees who are traveling and therefore unable to meet the deadline in order to avoid having lawful dependents dropped from the plan.

RPEA requested that the deadlines be extended, and DRB has agreed to extend the deadline to October 23rd. Any response postmarked on or before October 23rd will be considered timely.

2) RPEA also questions DRB's legal authority to drop lawful dependents from the plan if their arbitrary deadlines are not met. We have reviewed

the statutes, regulations and plan language, and find no authority for the action that DRB intends to take. We have brought this concern to the attention of DRB officials, and we await their response.

In the meantime, DRB intends to follow through with the requirements and penalties stated in the letter from HMS.

If a lawful dependent is dropped, there is an appeal process, but until the appeal is complete the dropped dependent will not receive benefits, including pharmacy benefits. If the dependent is restored to the plan because the requested documents are submitted, claims from the time the dependent was dropped up until the time they were restored to the plan will be covered.

If anyone has a lawful dependent who is dropped from the plan for any reason, please contact Sharon Hoffbeck immediately at sharonhoffbeck@gmail.com

One retiree told us that he did not receive a letter from HMS even though he had dependents on the plan. Upon contacting DRB, he was told that his name was erroneously excluded from the list of retirees sent to HMS to be audited. DRB had no explanation for the error but they did correct it after the fact.

If you have dependents on your retiree AlaskaCare plan, but have not yet received a dependent audit letter from HMS, please let us know.

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



CONTACT INFORMATION

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Northern Region Chapter News

Clark Milne, NR Vice President

Hello from Fairbanks:

I thought this E-Newsletter was a great opportunity to: introduce myself to the Chapter, and inform Northern Region Chapter members and let others know about our efforts – because not everyone visits our highly informative RPEA website. But you should!

You can access the site at www.rpea.apea-aft.org

As the newly elected Northern Region Chapter Vice-President, I will serve a two-year term leading the Chapter, attending RPEA's Executive Board meetings, and keeping you informed on what RPEA is doing to protect our members' retirement pensions and health care benefits. I spent 14 years of my engineering career at the ADOT&PF, and traveled throughout northern Alaska during that time. Please feel free to email me if I can help you as I serve in this NR VP role, at milne@mosquitonet.com

We kicked off our year recently with our "Annual NR Planning" meeting on August 16. We discussed the events of the summer and began planning our eight monthly Chapter meetings, which will all be held at:

Raven Landing - Doors open at 11:30 AM - meetings held from 12:00 noon end 1:30 PM

Once the presentation and speakers are confirmed you can find the meeting dates and topics at the NR tab of the RPEA website, along with each month's meeting minutes. This is a very convenient way to keep up with what is going on, whether you have the chance to attend our meetings or not.

Our first two meetings have been confirmed, as shown below:

- **September 21st: An Overview of Elder Law:** by Rachael Delehanty, the AmeriCorps Elder Justice Fellow for the Fairbanks office of the Alaska Legal Services Corporation.
Presenting on the Specialty of Elder Law with a Focus on Miller Trusts, Guardianship and Conservatorship, Implementing Powers of Attorney Health Care Directives and Single-Household Concerns
- **October 19th: Prospects for creation of the Alaska Retiree Health Plan Advisory Board** by Bob Grove, RPEA's Legislative Committee Chairman, who will present on the history of proposed legislation and the dual-path strategy for shaping this Advisory Board to knowledgeably protect and preserve Alaska's health care trusts.

Have a good fall, and we hope you will mark your calendar and join us for these events.

Due to space constraints this item was not included in the printed September newsletter