

Public Employees Attacked in Juneau

-Tom Brice, Business Representative, Juneau

Here are many words to describe this past Legislative session. None of them are complimentary.

Governor Murkowski's focus, if it could be argued that he has one, has been to attack the working people of Alaska, especially those in the public sector. Consider the bills he supported and introduced and the point is made. **Business Manager Jim Ashton** was aggressive in fighting this agenda and was integral in the strategy to protect public employees this session. Due to his hard work and that of Local 71 staff and members, Governor Murkowski had to call a special session to get his anti-worker agenda passed.

Senate Bill 141, which revamped the entire Public Employees Retirement System for new hires as of July 1, 2006, was easily the most foul. This bill replaces the pension system current employees receive with savings accounts. So when you retire under this plan you will have to live on the savings accumulated during your work with the state rather than having the security of a regular pension check. When the savings account is gone, it is gone.

SB 130, the rewrite of the state's worker compensation laws, was also another attack on the workers in Alaska. Generally, major revisions to these statutes come from a group made up of businesses and labor representatives to ensure that changes to the system aren't a product of undue political influence and are fair to injured workers. This session, after asking for recommendations from this working group last year, the Governor ignored their efforts and introduced his own legislation. In the end, changes to the workers compensation laws politicize the appeals process, greatly limits medical assistance for an injured individual experiencing chronic pain, and creates ambiguous standards for individuals who have been injured in the past. All this without any expected savings on workers compensation premiums from the insurance companies. What a deal. NOT!

HB 257, which initially would expand the privatization of the state's procurement system to all departments across the state, was another major fight

that Business Manager Ashton was able to weigh in on in this session. The current pilot implemented in Southeast Alaska with the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities has been an unqualified failure. Based on that, Alaska Supply Chain Integrators, who is currently running the project, used their political muscle to have HB 257 introduced. Through the committee process, Local 71, in conjunction with the other affected public employees unions, were able to narrow the focus and ultimately stop its passage this session. It will be back next January.

Governor Murkowski proclaiming the session a success is like calling a plane crash a successful landing because all the parts made it to the ground. The problem in both instances is that people are hurt. The need for members of Public Employees Local 71 to be politically active is greater today than ever before. Contact the Union Hall for more information on how you can have your voice heard in the halls of Juneau.

**Let your voice be heard!!
Contact your Legislator.
They work for you!!**

<http://www.local71.com/legis.htm>

Hazmat Endorsement Background Check

-Ralph Maston, Special Representative, Anchorage

A quick update on the Hazmat Endorsement Background Check; we are currently working with the Department of Administration to sift through those positions which do not actually require the Hazmat endorsement.

It is our understanding that the Governor intends to request an exemption of this requirement from Washington for Alaska State employees. In the meantime remember that the State is obligated to pay for the initial TSA background check as per our contract language.

Give your Union Rep a call if you encounter any difficulties.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE Know Your Rights

-Ralph Maston, Special Representative, Anchorage

-Bonnie Sullivan, Business Representative, Fairbanks

"Workplace Violence" That phrase brings to mind all kinds of images. But I'll bet it doesn't bring to mind some of the more common issues being dealt with as "violence in the workplace". In this current climate of "political correctness" and "zero tolerance", things such as intimidation, off color jokes or comments, sexual or racist jokes, comments, or innuendo, and even foul language are just some of the things, though previously tolerated, that are no longer acceptable.

As more and more people become familiar with this term, we are seeing an increasing number of accusations and, as a result, discipline in the workplace. Whether it's someone making a comment about coworkers sexual orientation, race, religion, an inappropriate joke heard or even overheard by someone who finds it offensive, or simply off color language that someone takes exception to. We all need to be aware that someone is listening all the time and that not all of your coworkers share your sense of what is funny or appropriate to say at any given time.

Given that the median age of our union is around the mid-forties it's safe to say that a good number of us grew up in an age where off-color language or jokes did not get the kind of attention it does now. There was a time, even though it may still have been distasteful, offensive and even intimidating, it was tolerated. Workers are demanding management provide the kind of workplace where they can feel safe from foul language, offensive comments and even actual violence against their person.

The State of Alaska is responding to these incidents with a seriousness bordering on the fanatic, therefore you must be aware of and, if necessary, adjust your behavior. It is extremely difficult for your Shop Steward or your Business Representative to defend you in regards to these issues. It is not so much what you intend to say or do that is the issue here, rather how your actions or words are perceived by your coworkers. Sometimes the most seemingly innocent comment or action can be misinterpreted and cause you to be brought in for discipline. The levels of discipline range from a letter of instruction up to and including termination depending on the seriousness of the complaint. So help us help you by being more aware of how your words or actions may be perceived by your coworkers. Let us all strive for a safe and pleasant workplace.

Random drug and alcohol testing is here to stay. But for the safety of our members there is a process that needs to be followed. You have a right to understand that process completely. It is important to mention **you do not have a right to "refuse" to test**. You do however, have a right to know what you will be tested for, drugs or alcohol or both.

There are many ideas floating around the workplace regarding the amount of time you have to comply once you have been notified you need to test, but in reality, once you have been notified you need to comply immediately. The two hour limit is the maximum amount of time you have to supply a sample. For instance, if you have just relieved yourself and your foreman comes over and tells you to go get tested. Probability is that you won't be able to supply a sample until you have more liquid in your system. If you are drinking liquid and can't supply a sample after two hours, there could be a medical problem and the collector will pursue that avenue further.

However, in most cases, you will be notified and you will go to the collection site immediately. If you are testing for drugs, you have a right to:

- ☞ know what you are being tested for;
- ☞ a sanitized area to supply the sample;
- ☞ a washing area to sanitize your hands before and after supplying the sample;
- ☞ observe the collector opening two sterile cups;
- ☞ observe your sample being split in the sterile cups and lids placed on them;
- ☞ initial the seals once they have been placed on the cups.

Please, if you have any concerns over the possibility of your sample being contaminated by the process, you need to speak up immediately. It is easier to address your concerns the moment they happen, then to try and prove the process was done incorrectly weeks later. **REMEMBER** by signing your initials on the cups you confirm the process was completed properly.

Governor Thanks Trims and Delta 71 Members

-Bonnie Sullivan, Business Representative, Fairbanks

Governor Frank Murkowski personally thanked a number of Local 71 members for their commitment to their jobs in the face of imminent danger. The members were given letters thanking them for the extraordinary effort they put forth last Christmas eve in rescuing a number of travelers stranded by blizzard conditions on the Richardson Highway.

That night, our members showed the courage and dedication the traveling public has come to rely on. When the situation presented itself, our members were prepared and worked together to get the stranded travelers home for Christmas. Local 71 is proud to represent our brave Alaskan workers.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I would like to send out a personal "thank you" to all the members, you know who you are, who stepped up to the plate and talked to their legislators, wrote Public Opinion Messages (POM) and testified against many of the bad bills which could and will not only hurt public employees but all Alaskan working people. We fought long and hard against these bills, some we won and others we lost, but our collective voice was heard in the halls of the capitol and I would like to personally thank you for making our voice stronger!

In solidarity,
Jim Ashton

If you would like to be added to our online mailing list please send your name, phone number and email address to ralph@local71.com. Please remember to put "Email Updates" in the subject line. We are compiling a list of members who would rather receive newsletters and member updates by email rather than regular mail in order to both save our membership money on printing costs and to get the information to you in a more expedited manner. We are not able to accept State of Alaska email addresses as they have a strict policy on the use of these email addresses.

Letter from the Editor

-Tracy Newbill, Anchorage

Since the transfer to Seattle of Pat Smutz, our previous communications officer, we have been sorely lacking in the area of communications with our members. As we have only five business representatives to our 2000 plus membership the ability to get regularly updated information out to our entire membership has not been an easy task.

I hope to assist in this capacity by becoming the new editor of the Local 71 Newsletter. I have been training extensively for the past few weeks and will continue the training required to make sure our members are informed to the best of my ability.

We also hope to be updating our website shortly to be more "user friendly" to our members. Please look for these things in the upcoming months. If you have any comments regarding the newsletter or website, either information you would like to see included or items you believe the membership should be aware of please email me at tracy@local71.com with the "Newsletter" in the subject line.

PUBLIC EMPLOYEES LOCAL 71



NON-PROFIT ORG.

U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

PERMIT 254

ANCHORAGE, AK

2510 Arctic Blvd,
Anchorage, AK 99503



Local 71 Informer

An official publication of the Laborers International Union of North America, Public Employees Local 71



Jim Ashton
Business Manager
Secretary-Treasurer

SEF & M&O ONE DUTY STATION...AGAIN

-Dale Johnson, Business Representative,
Anchorage

A little less than a year ago DOT went through some fundamental organizational changes. One of these changes being Maintenance & Operations (M&O) and State Equipment Fleet (SEF) were broken out into their respective sections making them separate Duty Stations. The aftermath of this was a change which no one anticipated. DOT decided to make this change retroactive adversely affecting a couple of our members who when promoting or transferring from SEF positions to M&O positions lost all duty station seniority. One of these members having approximately 20 years of seniority wiped out with a single stroke of a pen somewhere in personnel.

Of course the Union filed Grievances on their behalf and as a result of some hard work by your Union Representatives, we have a signed Letter of Agreement with the State that restores SEF and M&O back to their prior status as one duty station at each location. The duty station seniority for both of these members has been restored closing the Grievances.

As a result of this turmoil one glaring problem became evident and still remains. The Union was never notified that this separation had taken place. It is incumbent on the State to notify the Union when there are changes that affect our members' seniority! We are and will continue to work on your behalf to correct these oversights by the State.

New Business Representative sought for Fairbanks Office

As many of you are aware, our Business Representative in Fairbanks, Sister Bonnie Sullivan, has requested to return to her position as Administrative Assistant/Dispatcher in the Fairbanks office.

Bonnie has done an outstanding job and will be missed in her capacity as Business Representative. We can take solace however, in the fact that she will still be in the Fairbanks office offering her knowledge and experience to who ever takes her place.

We are currently looking for a Business Representative to fill the position in our Fairbanks office.

This position requires good communication skills, patience, a strong desire to support the Union and its members as a whole as well as individually. This position, though normally between the hours of 8-5, will require extended hours in order to meet the needs of our membership. Travel for training, conferences and membership meetings is also a requirement of this position.

We offer an excellent salary and benefits package for the right individual.

Please submit a resume to:

Jim Ashton
Business Manager
2510 Arctic Blvd
Anchorage, AK 99503

This position closes at 5:00 PM July 15th 2005. Applicants will be contacted for interview after that date.

Go to our website to view your union contract, and more at:

www.Local71.com