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## The Fight Has Just Begun –Ralph Maston

Congratulations are in order for the people of Alaska for the spanking given to our sitting Governor. It is heartening to know that there are limits to what the people of Alaska will tolerate when it comes to their elected officials. But Brothers & Sisters the fight is not over yet, we still have the general election coming up and it is more important than ever to pay attention to the what the candidates say and even more important than that is to look at the previous records. This election coming up may be the most important in Alaska's recent history, do we move forward as a state or do we languish in the oil revenue while it lasts. We just recently had the AFL-CIO Biennial convention here in Anchorage and the two candidates for governor spoke to the delegates and answered some very well thought out questions about what

would be their respective agendas if they were elected and in my humble opinion there was a hands down winner, Tony Knowles. It was universally well received by all the convention delegates and earned him the AFL-CIO endorsement along with Ethan Berkowitz as Lt-Governor. We are very encouraged by the attitude displayed by our former (and hopefully future) governor as it relates to our specific issues and issues that affect all Alaskans. Thank you to all our members who took the time to vote in the primary and please continue to exercise your right to vote when it comes to the general election and remember to read the cards that we send out informing you of the candidates who will do their best for you, the members.

### Office Locations

#### Anchorage Office

2510 Arctic Blvd  
Anchorage, AK 99503  
(907) 276-7211

#### Fairbanks Office

2122 Airport Way  
Fairbanks, AK 99701  
(907) 452-5024

#### Juneau Office

710 W 9TH Ave  
Juneau, AK 99801  
(907) 586-6993



#### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Negotiation Update
- Change to Employment Referral Program
- How Politics affect you

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# Informer

OCTOBER 2006

## Business Manager's Report

Summer has come to an end and I sincerely hope that all our members have been safely enjoying all that Alaska has to offer. This has been a very busy summer for your local and we are making some very positive and progressive steps to improve and enhance the working conditions and benefits that we enjoy. Your Business Representatives have been making a very concrete effort to get out to as many duty stations and communicate with as many of you as possible. I will give a quick update on the issues that the Representatives have been questioned on the most. If you have any other questions or would like further explanation please feel free to call your Representative or this office.



**James S Ashton**  
Business Manager  
Secretary-Treasurer

#### State of Alaska Contract Negotiations

The Contract for the members working for the State of Alaska is scheduled to expire on December 31 of this year. By law we cannot begin "official" negotiations until 90 days prior to that date. That would mean that the earliest we could begin "official" discussions with the employer would be the first of October of this year.

As time goes on and things change and develop there is a need to modify contract language to accommodate and comply with the changes and to improve the working conditions for our membership. Our offices have received some very good suggestions and questions regarding the contract language in several different areas. These suggestions and questions have all been documented and will be used in determining the best possible guide for our upcoming negotiations.

As we have discussed, we will utilize a "resource committee" to confer, brain-storm and compile information to go on the questionnaire that will be sent out to the membership for additional comment and a listing of priorities for the negotiating team to address with the employer.

**When** we begin the official negotiations is a matter of strategy. Negotiations begin with the outgoing

administration and history has shown us that those discussions have ultimately ended in wasted time, money and effort... there are currently changes being made in the Labor Relations Department and we are seeing some positive changes in the way disputes are being addressed. If we can make a change in the legislature and get a Governor who is considerate and concerned about his/her employees, (you) then we will have a much better chance in attaining positive changes and not in just spending all our time working ardently to just maintain existing contract language.

#### Is the Local going to hire a professional negotiator?

We already have one.

Your Business Manager has been involved in the full negotiations for the State of Alaska contract since 1990 and has been the chief spokesman for three separate contracts with not just the State but also the Haines Borough, the Municipality of Anchorage and the Anchorage School District. To those who are not familiar with and are afraid of the

complicated, intricate and convoluted process of contract negotiations it would seem an easy answer to hire a "stranger" to argue your points. However the reality of the matter is, when a specific section of the contract is discussed it is critically important that the spokesman know the *history* of the contract; why a specific sentence, section or word is where it is. As some of you who have been members for many years know, a small change can make a huge difference, especially when it occurs in an area where both parties have been trying to make changes. It is also important to know the history of the grievances that have been filed and where the differences of opinion have occurred. A stranger would not have any of that knowledge and would be easy to manipulate into changing language that would have a very long lasting adverse affect on the membership.

**The wonderful thing** about contract negotiations is that the membership always has the final word on what the contract provides through the ratification vote. Remember, it is you the membership who ultimately decides on the final contract.



**Good News:** The new Basic Benefit and Flexible Spending Account Plan booklets are in the mail. If you have not yet received your book, we may have an old address. **Please ensure that the Trust has your current mailing address.**

**More News:** Open Enrollment for the 2006/2007 Plan year has concluded. The Trust has mailed out two copies of the Verification of Election forms to everyone. Please ensure that you review your forms for accuracy. Notify the Trust if you find an error on the forms. If you are satisfied that the forms are correct, you (and your spouse if applicable) should sign one of the forms and return it to the Trust in the envelope provided (keep the other copy for your records).

**Note:** Your plan elections will remain the same throughout the 2006/2007 Plan year, unless you experience a "Qualifying Event" (change in family status).

You can find an exhaustive list of "Eligible Qualifying Events" on Page 4 of your 2006

Enrollment Guide; or feel free to call the Trust office and we will be glad to give you the list.

In order to change your elections you must notify the Trust office with enough time to allow us to mail you a "Qualifying Event" enrollment packet and allow you time to complete the forms, submit proof of the qualifying event and return everything to the Trust **within 60 days of the "qualifying event"**.

*Trust contact information:*

*Public Employees Local 71 Trust Fund  
2510 Arctic Blvd.  
Anchorage, AK 99507*

*Phone: (907) 276-7107 (In Anchorage)*

*Phone: 1-800-446-3671 (Toll Free)*

*Fax: (907) 274-7101*

*Email: Renita Williams – renita@local71.com  
Debi Hansen – trust@local71.com*

## Good News for Non-Perm Employees

After much work, Local 71 has been successful in obtaining a variance that will allow its members to remain on the out of work list while they are working in a non-permanent position.

In the past, when a member accepted a non-permanent position they were removed from the "out of work" list and were not able to be called if a permanent position became available in the classifications they had on their application.

Since non-permanent positions do not receive benefits, seniority or retirement, your Business

Manager, Jim Ashton felt it was unfair for a member to be barred from an interview for a permanent position if one should become available during service as a non-permanent employee.

The Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA) agreed and a variance has been implemented to allow the change. We see this as a very positive move and a benefit to our members. If you have any questions on this change please feel free to contact your local Dispatcher.

## All Politics Are Local -Tom Brice

Tip O'Neal, former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, had a saying: "All politics are local." Whether you, as a public employee, will accept this as fact doesn't matter. It is as true as the law of gravity: believe or don't believe, you still fall. As an individual who depends on a public entity, state or municipal, for a paycheck you impact your chance for a raise, your working conditions, your retirement system, in short, every aspect of your job, each time you step in a voting booth.

The state and municipal officials you elect are the individuals who will be sitting across the bargaining table from you, voting on whether to privatize your job, restoring or taking away your retirement. I run into folks who regularly tell me that they vote counter to an endorsement of the local union. In the next breath they complain about the fact they didn't get a raise or that their friend had their job privatized. The question that I ask is pretty simple: "What made

you think the candidate you supported would support your job? The response to that question is what this story is all about. They respond: "Well, I voted for them because ...". You fill in the blank, because there is a whole host of reasons and none of them relate to a candidate's view of public employees and the importance of paying a competitive wage, providing attractive benefits, or ensuring the security of public jobs. Or worse yet, "I didn't vote."

Local 71 take's its political action seriously; it takes its endorsements seriously; and it takes its lobbying seriously. It has to because we all live or die in the legislative, assembly, and school board chambers of Alaska. It doesn't matter whether we like it or not, there is a direct connection between a public employee's job and benefits and the people we elect. **All politics are local.**

**"Most state employees are seriously underpaid; I helped make them that way."**

-Art Chance , Retired Labor Relations Director  
Anchorage Daily News, July 8, 2006

## Contract Negotiations

**It's that time again.** Many of you have already received you surveys for the upcoming negotiations. Your Union is anxiously awaiting your concerns and opinions so that we can be better serve you in negotiations. Many factors will come into play for the upcoming negotiations. We have a new administration coming in. This will definitely be a key factor in how much we are able to get for you in wages and benefits.

**The best way** to ensure that your Union is better able to get you the increases you are looking for, is to pay close attention to the cards you

receive telling you who our friends in the upcoming elections are. These should be coming to you shortly.

Remember that no matter what your personal opinion of these candidates, they have shown that they are "Friends of Labor" which means they are also friends to your paycheck.

**Always remember our strength is in our members and our numbers.**

