

## **President's Report**

**April 2006**

Our most recent Corporate Board Meeting was held in Juneau to facilitate interfacing with the Legislature at our annual Legislative Reception. To my pleasant surprise, the reception seemed to be affective and was well attended. The atmosphere was much different than I had expected and it gave your PSEA representatives excellent opportunities to share our concerns with legislators. I had and heard many meaningful conversations regarding the future of DPS and PSEA. Obviously, our hope is that the relationships we forged there will serve us well in the future. We also met with a number of legislators before and after the reception. I, personally, was encouraged by feedback I received from various legislators as they expressed their dismay with the current direction of DPS. I will be meeting with several of them after they return home from the legislative session to discuss what can/should be done. A large number of legislators are from Anchorage so their focus in Juneau is doing what is good for their Anchorage constituents. Consequently, Anchorage benefits two-fold – by way of the Anchorage Assembly and Anchorage legislators. One challenge is going to be helping them see beyond the Anchorage area to take care of State and municipal employees throughout Alaska.

Prior to this legislative session we anticipated the presentation of anti-union legislation. It has become apparent that the legislature has been so occupied with the oil tax issues they haven't had, and likely will not have, time for other legislation of great consequence. This is a good thing for us and has alleviated our concerns. You have been receiving legislative updates via your PSEA e-mail account. Please get logged on and review them and other information. If you have not yet connected to the system you will find approximately 45 messages. If you are having difficulty call the PSEA office (toll free 1-877-337-1979) and speak with Yvonne.

As I have met and conversed with many of you in the past several months I have mentioned the need for all of us to politically active this election year. I expected that by now we would have a handle on the candidates, which races are most important to us, and an involvement plan. Well, unfortunately, the deadline for candidates to file is June 1, 2006 so we don't have a full picture of the races. So, once we have that information we will be able to decide on some direction and will be sending the information out. The PAC has discussed tentative game plans and has positively considered forming local PAC's so that our members in local areas can be involved in a very real way under the direction of the PSEA PAC. Give consideration to your time and family and if you are able, please volunteer to be a part of a local PAC when that time comes.

We have been working on a number of Letters of Agreement (LOA) with DPS and have successfully accomplished an agreement on the Relief Shift Differential Pay. We are progressing on agreements surrounding the Seniority List and Flex Shift Differential Pay in order to clarify contract language, intent, and past practices to insure that our members receive due compensation and eliminate future confusion.

John Cyr is working diligently on contract negotiations for a number of our Municipal Chapters – Ketchikan, Soldotna, and Unalaska. Each are at various stages in the process and John has outlined the details in his Business Manager's report posted on the PSEA web site.

Some items of significance that the Corporate Board has approved:

1. PSEA Representative Training – to be scheduled following the 2006 tourist season. The training will be available to all PSEA Corporate and Chapter Officers/Reps. There will also be an anticipated 10 slots open to the general membership and will be filled by application and invitation. The training will take place in Anchorage over two very full days. This is anticipated to become an annual event.
2. Business Agent – the Board approved the advertisement for and hiring of a new business agent. You can find the ad on the PSEA website. Advertisements have been placed in select newspapers throughout Alaska and on national web sites. It is expected to run through April. We have already received some very good applicants with great qualifications.
3. Shooting Review Boards – the Board has recognized the need for consistency in representing our members involved in duty-related shootings. We have asked Reps to inform/solicit members interested in serving as quasi-permanent selectees available to our members facing a shooting review board. It is recognized that selectees must be tactically qualified in order to serve effectively. Those interested and qualified will be listed and available for selection by the member being reviewed. We encourage anyone interested in serving in this capacity to notify your PSEA Representative.
4. Policy and Procedure Review Committee – this committee has made huge progress in recent weeks. They have been tasked with reviewing/revising/updating the PSEA Article of Incorporation, By-Laws, and Policy and Procedures Manual. This is not an easy or simple task. They have my greatest appreciation for their efforts as we work toward updated and consistent policies.

In May 2006 the Health Trust Trustees will be meeting with Premera and various consultants to decide on the direction of PSEA Health Care for 2006/2007. We are anticipating a rise in proposed health care costs but not as substantial as last

year's proposal from Premera. This will allow us greater flexibility in determining benefit changes and/or increases. We are also entertaining proposals on self-funding options. What this means is that the Trustees are seriously considering the possibility of exercising a number of self-funding options in which the Trustees play a greater role in determining what benefits are approved and paid. This would give the Trust the ability to change benefits as we see fit rather than be bound to an insurance provider's guidelines/policies. This would require more work on the part of the Trustees but could provide better health coverage to our members at a lower rate. Of course, a major determiner of exercising this option is whether the Trust can afford it. This should be a very interesting meeting.

The Trustees have also discussed Trustee training. By the Health Trust Agreement drafted and approved under legal counsel, all Trustees are required to attend training at least once annually and must be able to demonstrate proof of attendance credits. Typically, this has been accomplished by our attending annual conferences sponsored by the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans (IFEBC). We have explored other training options that meet the requirements of the Trust Agreement and have not found any other organization that provides this type of accredited training. However, we are actively exploring other training options that may be less expensive and meet the requirements.

We have several elections coming up prior to June. We will be sending information, nomination forms, and ballots in the very near future. Please be involved in the election process so that your representation is the best it can be.

We have seen an increase in disciplinary efforts toward PSEA members in several of our chapters that reach into the realm of violating constitutionally guaranteed privacies and have generated approximately 30 Administrative Investigations and Grievances. This is of great concern to us and should be to every PSEA member. Remember that we are a union! In other words, we are supposed to be like minded and acting on certain issues. We must forge ahead banding together on these issues (pay, benefits, retirement, contract enforcement, and workplace environment). We must not pressure fellow members to work outside their Collective Bargaining Agreements, make special deals with management, acquiesce to inappropriate treatment, or sacrifice their integrity to satisfy individual or collective supervisors. We have seen a large number of instances where management has targeted and disciplined some PSEA members for reasons that have gone unaddressed with other members. We believe this is because some are viewed as, "the weakest chicken in the barnyard". We are no stronger than our weakest member and we must lend support to each other.

Upcoming Meetings:

1. Health Trust Rerate – May 2-3, 2006; Seattle, WA

2. PSEA Corporate Board – tentatively June 20, 2006; Anchorage office; 10:30am
3. Various Chapter meetings/teleconferences – contact your local representative for details and dates.

Thank you for your continued efforts to be the best you can be despite the challenges both within and outside your agencies. Remember that you did not surrender your rights when accepting your employment; and, your employer did not hire you to do you a favor. You were selected and hired from a pool of applicants and were deemed to be the best fit for your department's needs – you were hired in your department's best interest. Don't be fooled into believing that you are employed by some undeserved grace. Stay strong and stand together!

Rob Cox

PSEA President