

**Sharon Hoffbeck**  
Incumbent Candidate for President  
Retired Public Employees of Alaska

I have been a member of both the PERS and TRS retirement systems, first entering in 1970 and retiring in 2003 as an occupational training self-support program developer/manager and instructor in the Div. of Culinary Arts at UAA. I have more than 30+ years' experience with various state agencies that includes business management, construction accounting for \$30M in construction projects, and teaching for 10+ years.

**Experience with RPEA:**

I have been on the RPEA Executive Board since 2012 as the Medical Information Director, Executive Vice President, and for the past 4 years as President.

During the entire period from 2012 to 2020, I have had continued, frequent engagement with the following:

- Department of Administration's (DOA) Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners,
- Deputy Chief of Staff to the Governor,
- Division of Retirement & Benefits' (DRB) Directors, Chief Health Policy Officer and Chief Pension Officer,
- All of the TPAs (third party administrators) including HealthSmart, Aetna, Moda Health, OptumRx, Univita and CHCS (Univita and CHCS are previous and current Long Term Care plan TPAs),
- The Retiree Health Plan Advisory Board (RHPAB), attending all meetings and frequently meeting with the Board member who holds the RPEA PERS seat on that Board.
- The ARMB (Alaska Retirement Management Board) attending their meetings when time allows, and frequently meeting with the chair of the ARMB to get updates concerning the retiree trust fund, as well as inviting him to speak at RPEA Executive Board meetings to allow the E-Board members to ask questions and get information that they can then pass to chapter members.

My long history of participation, knowledge and ongoing contact with the DOA, DRB, RHPAB, ARMB and TPAs, gives me a wealth of background information and knowledge that is critically needed to guide RPEA in a direction that will continue to be successful in supporting retirees.

In the role of president, I have vigorously supported and advanced RPEA's mission to protect State of Alaska retirement benefits. During my leadership, and aided immensely by the skills and involvement of our current excellent Executive Board, RPEA prevailed in the retiree Dental plan diminishment lawsuit and is currently strongly moving toward prevailing in the Medical plan diminishment lawsuit. The success of these lawsuits is critical in assuring that the hard-earned, constitutionally protected retirement benefits that all retirees were promised when they took jobs with the State, and depend on, are available when needed. The Division of Retirement & Benefits has a long-range plan to reduce benefits as much as possible. Vigilance and dedication to the careful management of these lawsuits are necessary if their efforts are to be thwarted.

At a time when retiree benefits are in real jeopardy of being reduced, perhaps even severely reduced, the success of the lawsuits is imperative. I believe that my long history with RPEA puts me in the best position to help lead RPEA to continued success and the RPEA lawsuits to successful conclusions.

One of the critical functions of the president's position is to effectively work with the standing committees, chapters and E-Board, keeping the various groups coordinated and working toward a common goal. I actively participate on all of the standing committees, as well as the chapter meetings in Anchorage, Juneau and Fairbanks. My long-standing participation on the Medical Information Committee, and Executive Board since 2012 gives me the unique ability to understand all aspects of the organization, as well as the in-depth history needed to effectively support the standing committees and chapters.

In all of my roles with RPEA beginning in 2012, I have attended all Quarterly TPA Meetings with the Div. of Retirement & Benefits and their contracted TPAs (currently Aetna, Moda Health, OptumRx, and CHCS). My role at these meetings is to actively represent RPEA in expressing concerns regarding retirement benefits. In my role as president, I communicate regularly with appropriate State agencies, boards and members of the legislature. My long-standing history of attending these meetings, regular communication with State agencies and legislative members for the past 8 years allows me to effectively support Counsel in both the Dental and Medical diminishment lawsuits.

## **Communication with Membership**

One of the things that I implemented immediately upon taking the president's position was to begin sending members frequent monthly updates concerning benefits, helping them understand what our specific, in writing and constitutionally protected benefits are and how to access them. I receive hundreds of responses to those updates from members and respond to each one answering questions and providing information when requested for appeals and various communications retirees have with state agencies concerning their benefits.

We continue to communicate via RPEA's website. The site is well designed and maintained by RPEA's IT manager, making navigation easy and information posted pertinent.

## **Retiree Health Plan Advisory Board**

I was instrumental in my leadership roles moving RPEA forward in negotiating with the Administration to create the Retiree Health Plan Advisory Board. The current Board design and function are based on RPEA's committee work which was presented to the Administration and used when negotiating with the Commissioner of Administration, State of Alaska Boards & Commissions and Deputy Chief of Staff to the Governor, and was largely adopted in the final Board design.

I, along with the RPEA Executive Vice President, attend the Retiree Health Plan Advisory Board meetings as well as the Board's sub-committee meetings. The Div. of Retirement & Benefits (DRB) presents lists of retiree benefits that they would like changed, added or reduced at both the sub-committee and full Board meetings. We feel that it is critical that

these meetings be attended in order to assess what direction RPEA should take for each of the proposals and provide input at the meetings during the public comment periods.

## **Power of RPEA**

RPEA has become a powerful force and is the primary retiree organization that the Administration acknowledges.

One of what I consider to be my greatest successes as president of RPEA was to work with the RPEA Retiree Benefits Committee in helping a retiree who was a quadriplegic being denied benefits under his Long Term Care policy with the State, overturn that decision in its totality. After a year and dozens of hours of committee meetings, and meetings with the Division of Retirement & Benefits and Commissioner of Administration, he was awarded full benefits as well as retroactive reimbursement for past benefits that were inappropriately denied. At the time he first contacted me he said that because he was being denied his LTC benefits, he was on the verge of losing his family's home so they could pay for his 24/7 care. A year later when he received the letter notifying him that he'd won the appeal and all future and past benefits would be paid, he cried as he left the voice message telling me of the good news and thanking RPEA for their help. A few months after his win, he passed away, having spent the last year of his life fighting for benefits that should never have been denied in the first place.

Because of my extensive participation in all aspects of RPEA, extensive networking with State agencies, and frequent communication with members, I was able to quickly help another member who contacted me very late one evening, attempting to get an emergency admit for his wife who had a severe addiction and was suicidal, to a specialized care facility. My extensive networking allowed me to quickly contact the DRB then-Deputy Commissioner at 11:00p.m. who was able to immediately assist and pave the way with Aetna for approval for the admit.

These are just two of many examples of the power of RPEA, and my commitment to RPEA members, to protect retirees when benefits are being inappropriately denied.

I would appreciate your support as I look forward to continuing as President of RPEA. I will continue to work tirelessly to serve retirees, individually and collectively, in that capacity.

## **VOLUNTEER WORK over the years:**

4-H Project Leader

American Heart Association—CPR Instructor

Religious Education Teacher

Retired Public Employees of Alaska