

Randall Burns
Candidate for Director of Communications

Hello Public Retiree!

I am asking for your vote for the position of RPEA's Communications Director. My name is Randall Burns, I will soon be 74 years old. I first came to Alaska in 1969, right out of college. (Fun fact: Rob Johnson and I attended Claremont McKenna College at exactly the same time!) I worked here in Anchorage for a few years and attended UAA (for a teaching certificate), and then went Outside to teach school for five years, returning to Anchorage in June of 1976. I have been here ever since.

I am submitting this candidate statement in hopes that I may be able to provide to you — and the other voting members of the Retired Public Employees of Alaska organization — evidence that my credentials and record of public service show that I would serve the RPEA well, both as its Communications Director and as an effective member of RPEA's Executive Board.

Background

I am a Tier I retiree, having first found state work beginning in mid-1976 with the Alaska Public Offices Commission, helping to develop the agency during its difficult start up years. I left APOC in late 1979, as its Executive Director, leaving after the agency had recovered from the tumultuous (Hickel v. Hammond) election bout of 1978.

After those first three years of State service, I was fortunate, over the next four decades, to hold some other very interesting and challenging administrative and policy positions in both Juneau and Anchorage, as well as completing my MS in Clinical Psychology at UAA in the mid-1990's. Not all of my Alaska jobs were State positions, but almost all of my State positions - highlighted in bold below - were in the partially exempt (PX) service. I have loved every one of the jobs I have held, and feel blessed to have had such a worthwhile career in Alaska in both public and private administration.

- * Executive Director, Alaska Bar Association (through 1983)
- * A **Special Assistant** to both Attorney General Harold Brown and DHSS Commissioner Myra Munson (through 1987)
- * **Division Director**, Occupational Licensing (through 1990)
- * Executive Director, American Civil Liberties Union, AK Office (through 1994)
- * **CEO**, Alaska Psychiatric Institute (through early 2003)
- * Executive Director, Alaska Small Hospital Performance Improvement Network, an affiliate of the Alaska State Hospital & Nursing Home Association (through 2010)
- * **Psychiatric Emergency Services Coordinator**, Division of Behavioral Health (thru 2015)
- * **Division Director**, Behavioral Health (thru September, 2018)

I list these positions in order to hopefully make the case to RPEA members — former public employees all — that my over 40 years of experience serving Alaska and its residents in such roles will have schooled me well in the requisite abilities required to successfully handle the work of a communications director. I know I have met and / or worked with more than of few of you when you were serving the public in your various positions and, like you, even while often serving in politically sensitive roles, I believe I worked very hard to successfully communicate with the diverse audiences and populations served by each state (and private) agency I represented.

Indeed, in every job I held, I was always communicating with a variety of publics, whether it was with the staff of the agencies I worked for, Alaska residents, the press, Alaska legislators, litigants, attorneys, constituent advocates, the courts / judges, or the many sister public agency representatives with whom I interacted. Through it all, I was striving to clearly communicate the reasons for — and rationale behind — many of the individual policy decisions made by each particular gubernatorial executive administration for whom I served.

The Role of Director of Communications for RPEA

I am running as a candidate for the position of Director of Communications on the RPEA Executive Board with the goal of stimulating a broader interest in RPEA activities through increased, timely communication of RPEA actions and the dissemination of the major objectives and rationale behind Executive Board decisions.

Since last year, when I was appointed to the RPEA Legislative Committee and to the Board of the RPEA Southcentral Chapter, I have regularly participated in Legislative Committee meetings; followed whatever retiree-related legislation the Legislative Committee deemed important to track; attended - only as an observer, of course - Executive Board meetings; and, finally, participated in Southcentral Chapter Board meetings. From my perspective, I think it fair to say that there is a lot going on within the RPEA organization that should / could be of very real interest to most retirees, but I do not see much broad, general RPEA membership involvement at either the local Chapter or Executive Board level.

I believe that the RPEA needs a Director of Communications who, with Executive Board support, not only publishes a regularly scheduled newsletter to all members, but one who will also commit the time necessary to provide timely communications around recent and important RPEA Board actions and policy decisions affecting retirees.

The general membership of the RPEA may not be aware that while our sole RPEA staff member produces draft minutes of each Executive Board meeting, for review by the Executive Board members at their next meeting, these minutes are not posted to the website, once approved, but are only available on request by members in good standing. This means, unless you are personally attending all RPEA committee and Executive Board meetings, and / or unless you know to make the effort to regularly request the finalized minutes, it is hard to be appropriately informed of impactful RPEA board actions.

Working with the Board Secretary, again with Board support, and shortly after each monthly Executive Board meeting, I would propose that the Communications Director prepare and release brief, highly focused (single-subject), informative email communications which summarize monthly key Board decisions on matters of topical interest to public retirees, so that the broader membership is on top of the often difficult policy considerations facing the RPEA.

I think regular communication of Board actions will produce a more informed, a more interested, and a more involved membership, especially when the reasons behind — and the rationale for — RPEA Executive Board actions are fully transparent to all our members. The end result of these improved communications would, I hope, be a membership more fully engaged in — and focused on — the RPEA's important mission and goals.

I believe transparency and regular communication will foster a knowledgeable membership. If elected, I pledge to you that I will work hard to ensure that all RPEA members have access to the most current and important policy, legislative, and legal concerns facing Alaska's premier public retiree membership organization. It is what I would hope to see from our Executive Board and what you should expect from the RPEA as a member.

I ask for your vote for the position of RPEA Communications Director. I would welcome the comments of any member concerning communications with and the transparency of RPEA communications with its members. Thanks so much for your time and attention!

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