



ALASKA CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

"Walking Alaska's Toughest Beat"

November 3, 2011

Correctional Officers,

This is just an odds and ends letter to touch on some subjects, issues, and questions that have come up this year and, most importantly, to give thanks where thanks are due.

ACOA Website:

We are in the **process** of creating a more dynamic website. We encourage you to bookmark the site and check it out regularly, www.acoa.us. It is a valuable source of information on your employment and your association. It also has many links that can be quite useful. As we work through the new site over the next few weeks, please check it out and send us your suggestions.

We recently added a networking link to promote Correctional Officers' businesses and special offers. If you are an active or retired Correctional Officer with a family business that you want to let others know about, or if you have found a special deal for C.O.s, please contact Deb and give her the details. Remember, as an active employee, you must inform the State of outside employment and also remember that our site is public so Management and your "clients" will have access to it.

Let us know if you work out a special deal for members; we will be happy to post it. Sergeant Keith Colin from HMCC worked out a discount rate for Correctional Officers at a local gym. If interested, see the website for all the information, or give us a call. We should support our own! This section of the site is up and running, so please check it out and browse the services and offers. As always, feedback is much appreciated.

Contract Negotiations:

Ever since the 2009-2012 Contract arbitration award was paid out, we have been urging the State to meet and negotiate. We first requested negotiations regarding the geographic differential study (which the State was required to do, as per that award) and, now more recently, to set dates to negotiate on the 2012-2015 contract. For many reasons, some reasonable, like the change of Administration, the State has not been able to meet. In response to our latest request they said they could not meet until December.

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Contract Negotiation continued:

Upon hearing of our attempts to get the State to the negotiating table, some members suggested we should not push so hard. They reminded us that 9 out of 10 members voted in favor of the proposed "universal" 2012-2015 contract in March of this year. The primary concern of those who voted for it was to secure the gains we won in our current contract, while delaying any negative changes that are expected because of the State's geographic differential study.

While this may seem desirable to many, we are obligated to move forward and to bargain. We are also obligated to represent members in locations such as Bethel and Nome, all of whom are suffering from the crippling increases in their "cost of living" due to the outrageous price increases in heating oil, fuel, and transportation costs.

In any case, delays caused by the State could result in our not obtaining a completed contract in a timely manner. For one thing, their delays mean that we will be starting negotiations later than normal, and we are miles apart on reaching an agreement. Remember, the State turned down a "one time" zero wage package offer last March. We will again be very fair in our negotiations; we will negotiate in good faith, but we will not settle for less than what other unions have received in wages. Our previous "zero wage offer" is completely off the table, except to remind Legislators that we did everything in our power to reach an agreement by putting forward a very fair offer. It is important for all members to remember that you, Correctional Officers, are Class 1 employees. If the contract lapses, all provisions of the previous contract stay in place, including wages, leave accrual, and geographic differential rates. In other words, if we don't have a new contract, nothing changes.

If we should end up in arbitration, it will be the State that forced us there. Should we prevail in contract arbitration, when we go for funding on that arbitration award, we will remind the Legislature that the State turned down a great offer in order to gamble on winning concessions at arbitration. It is their right to take that risk and it might very well pay off, but if that gamble fails, the State cannot take another bite at the apple by fighting the funding as they did so vigorously last time.

To the Officers of Bethel and Nome, if we should not reach an agreement in a timely manner, we believe that any agreement on geographic differential increases should be retroactive. Just like with the last contract when the State illegally voided the arbitration award, we believe you should receive checks for the retroactive amount.

Notepads/Note cards:

Enclosed is a pocket notepad to use in the course of your duties. The pocket notepad has information on your employment rights should you be questioned about possible discipline or an incident that you believe could lead to discipline. They are made to fit in your shirt pocket to be convenient for note taking. Also, we thought it will be a good way to make you aware of our contact numbers and our new physical address.

On the inside of the pocket notepad's back cover is a picture of a note card. The eagle photograph on the note card was donated by Retired Correctional Officer Carl Thompson. Thank you Carl. The monies from the note card will go to Correctional Officers in need through a new organization, called the Alaska Correctional Officer Foundation (ACOF). ACOA is setting up ACOF which will be dedicated to helping Correctional Officers injured in the line of duty, or who may encounter personal tragedies, along with being a public voice to the community.

If you would like to help, we need pictures of you or other Officers working with charities, with the community, or in news articles. These images and stories will help us build a strong ACOF website and Foundation as a whole.

Please purchase the eagle note cards and help your fellow Officers

Please consider purchasing and using the Eagle note cards for your personal use, as Christmas cards, or as gifts for family and friends in the "lower 48". You can promote Alaska and your fellow Correctional Officers at the same time. To order your cards you can go to the ACOA website or call, e-mail, or fax Deb directly. All the numbers you need are on the pocket notepad. The note cards are \$15 for packs of 10 or \$2 individually plus shipping. All the profits will be used to support Correctional Officers.

Fundraising, Public Relations and Foundations:

Thanks to the dedication of C.O.s, ACOA has become one of the most respected Associations in the State in a relatively short period of time, but we must always strive to better ourselves and to improve the public image of Correctional Officers. Almost all Law Enforcement Associations run fundraisers and there is good reason for that. It is great for public relations and uses a source other than members' dues to improve the image of law enforcement officers state-wide. We should be no different.

We already briefly mentioned ACOF, but we are also looking at developing additional organizations, along with specific fundraising events. One such organization will be the "End the Silence Foundation" to combat sexual abuse of children.

A specific fundraiser we are working on is a newsletter called "Glimpse Alaska". As these ideas develop, we will get detailed information to you. Also, once we are up and running, we will look to the membership for help with specific events. Whereas most Associations tie in with other organizations, we are starting our own.

Poll:

Enclosed is a poll on two possible contract changes. One or more members have asked and/or requested changes to the contract in regards to comp time and the week off/week on - day/night schedule. Although we are conducting the poll, negotiations are always fluid and circumstances change quickly - bargaining for something does not always mean that we get it. This poll is not definitive but will give Board Members direction and guidance in their decision-making on the issues polled.

We actually did a poll on one of these issues some years ago and it will be interesting to see how it comes out this time around. Please read the Pro's and Con's presented on each issue and then send in your vote/opinion. When completed, please put the poll card into the pre-stamped and addressed envelope enclosed.

Free \$3000 Insurance Policy:

Alaska Unions have signed up for a special offer from a union-oriented insurance company, American Income Life. In exchange for Unions sending out a letter for them, each member gets an automatic \$3000 Accidental Death and Dismemberment policy at no charge. They do have other good discounts because the company is tied into unions nationwide. Remember, you do not have to do or buy anything in order to receive the benefits described above.

The way this works is they do up the letter (written as they want) and then put it into a pre-stamped envelope. We get the sealed envelopes from them and we put the addresses on them. In other words, as always, we never give out member's addresses.

New Office Building:

We have moved to our new office building. We are slowly settling in between projects and work load priorities, but we should get there soon. Our goal is to get completely moved in by the annual meeting so you all can stop in and see your new professional offices. In June or July we will also have a two day open house, allowing one day for each shift, Wednesday/Thursday to come in and see the new office. We wish everyone could make it; but knowing everyone cannot, we will post pictures following the open house. It is really nice to have a place you can be proud of... especially when new members and Legislators drop by.

Thanks again:

There is a lot going on but our job in the office is made much easier by the support you all give us. We have dealt with some tough issues recently, including a nasty discipline arbitration. We would like to say thanks to all of the members who stepped up to help out by providing information and to all who placed themselves in harm's way by testifying. We also want to say thanks to all who have volunteered to help out in the office when needed. Last but not least, we want to thank all of you who have been patient and understanding whenever we've been busy with another member's issue.

In addition to all that, after long and intense negotiations, ACOA and the State just signed a very large Letter of Agreement (LGR). It involved some twenty plus grievances affecting 70 plus Officers. Many Officers received cash payouts and still others will receive additional leave payouts. We also believe that a memorandum negotiated as part of the LGR will add clarification to Article 22 by recognizing arbitrator Adler's decision on shift changes and directs that the ACOA award in that case will be followed by the Superintendents State-wide.

Most of the issues settled by the LGR were stand-alone issues involving individual settlements, but some settlements involved trading grievances. In these particular cases, Officers volunteered to settle their grievances for less, or withdrew their grievances completely so others could receive full settlements. Once again, this exemplifies what Correctional Officers are all about, Officers looking out for their fellow Officers.

Thanks for everything.



ACOA Business Manager