Message from UA President Pat Gamble

Your vote counts

Each one of you has an important choice in your hands—the union election dates are set and your ballot will arrive soon. The future of your personal relationship with the university will be determined by your co-workers who vote. If only 100 people return their ballots, then only 51 people will decide the fate of thousands. It is everyone’s responsibility to vote.

In the course of a unionizing campaign it’s understandable that a certain amount of confusion arises as representatives of both sides vie for your vote. Let me be clear, the only ironclad promise is that if a union is voted in, the terms of your employment, and the benefits that you value, will be placed on the negotiating table. Often the sole focus is on wages and compensation, but there are many other factors that are open to negotiation, including your health coverage, leave, tuition benefits and certain personnel policies. Even governance opportunities can be significantly limited.

From my personal perspective, relationships between employees and supervisors become more difficult when a union steps in between them. For example, while there currently is good opportunity for advancement within the university, that mobility is based on performance and potential. That reward opportunity is pretty much shelved when we switch to a system where seniority is the primary evaluation yardstick. We have exceptional employees, and the goals of those employees are often overlooked by unions seeking to please the greatest number of union members. Seniority, not service, would also play a predominant part in layoff decisions. And yes, even unions have provisions for layoffs. There is no more guaranteed security with a union in this current economic climate than you already enjoy. Finally, the university’s staff governance, a valuable resource for the university staff voice to go directly to top leadership, could no longer provide input on matters relating to compensation, health, or any matter negotiated by contract.

There are many factors that motivate individuals to vote for or against a union, and the decision is a personal one. The decision should be based on becoming fully informed, and deciding whether your decision results in the most overall value for you. A series of FAQs developed by the university is available through the Labor Relations website at www.alaska.edu/labor. If you still can’t find the answers you seek, call me personally at 450-8000. If I don’t know the answer I will find out who does.

In the end, it is your informed vote that counts. Either way, you, and who you are, counts a lot more to me than whether you are in a union or not. Thank you for what you do, and good luck.

Message from President Gamble and union election instructions inside.

Union ballots go to employees in the proposed bargaining unit on Oct. 19, 2010. Secret ballots must be received at the ALRA by 4:30 p.m. Nov. 5, 2010.
**Union Election FAQs**

**Q:** How do I vote in the election?

**A:** Votes are cast by secret mail ballot. The Alaska Labor Relations Agency (ALRA) will mail an official ballot to everyone in the proposed bargaining unit. The mailing will include (1) a notice of election, (2) instructions for the secret mail ballot, (3) an official ballot and (4) two envelopes. The instructions will tell you to mark with an X your choice of either "ASEA, AFSCME Local 52, AFL-CIO" or "No Bargaining Representative." ALRA will reject improperly marked ballots.

 Fold the ballot and place it in the envelope marked "OFFICIAL SECRET BALLOT." Place that envelope inside the larger pre-addressed, postage paid envelope: your signature, printed name, position and department of labor and is comprised of six members appointed by the governor and confirmed by the legislature. For more information on the procedures.

**Q:** Does my ballot need to be at the ALRA office by Nov. 5 or just postmarked by then? What if it is late?

**A:** The deadline for RECEIPT of your ballot is 4:30 p.m., Friday, Nov. 5, 2010. Receipt means physically in the ALRA office. Late ballots will be disqualified.

**Q:** When will I know election results?

**A:** ALRA advised the university and the union that a tally of valid ballots would be counted on Monday, Nov. 8, 2010. The election is decided by a simple majority. Employees will be notified of the results after the ballot count.

**Q:** How do I know that this REALLY is a secret ballot election?

**A:** There is NO WAY for anyone to know how you voted. On election day, ALRA Election Officer Jean Ward and other ALRA employees will read the names on the large envelopes and verify each voter and ballot number. They will remove the "OFFICIAL SECRET BALLOT" envelopes and place them in the ballot box. An ALRA employee will mix up the anonymous ballot envelopes. Then an ALRA representative opens each small envelope and reads out loud "ASEA" or "No Bargaining Representative." An ALRA employee, a university representative and a union representative each independently tally votes.

**Q:** What if I don’t receive my ballot?

**A:** Contact ALRA as soon as possible to request a replacement ballot. Each ballot has been individually assigned to an employee with an identification number. ALRA will send you a new ballot, with the same identification number, if your original ballot is lost, damaged or is otherwise unusable. By tracking each ballot, ALRA can ensure that an individual only votes once. The name on the election envelope must match the name associated with the identification number, so do not use another employee’s ballot.

**Sample Ballot**

**Mail your ballot early!**

ALRA sends out union ballots by mail. Make sure your address is correct.

- Union elections are set and administered by the Alaska Labor Relations Agency, ALRA.
- ALRA, the university and ASEA held a pre-election conference to determine the election procedure.
- The university provided ALRA with a current roster of employees.
- ALRA will mail secret ballots to all addresses on the roster on Oct. 19, 2010.
- Employees must properly mark the ballot and return it to ALRA by 4:30 p.m. Nov. 5, 2010.
- ALRA will count the ballots on Nov. 8, 2010.
- A simple majority of those who vote decide the election.
- If the majority vote for unionization, then negotiations between ASEA and UA will begin.
- If the majority vote against unionization, a new petition cannot be filed by any union for at least 12 months.

**Election Information**

The more employees who study the issues and vote in the election, the better.

Have questions? Visit www.alaska.edu/labor or call Labor Relations at 450-8230