Announcements

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November 2026

AlaskaCare is partnering with Better Beings, led by Michelle Zellner, to provide educational classes and coaching opportunities focused on healthy habits, mindfulness, stress reduction, and finding a healthy balance on your wellness journey. The next webinar in the series will be next week on Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2026.

When: Wed., Nov. 4, 2026, 11 am – 12pm AKST

Where: Microsoft Teams Webinar. **REGISTER HERE**

Topic: Get Well, Stay Well

Dental-Vision-Audio (DVA) Open Enrollment for the AlaskaCare Health Plan for 2027 starts **November 4 and closes at 5 p.m. Alaska Time on November 25, 2026.** If you do not participate **you will be kept in your current plan.**

2027 Monthly Premium Rate Chart				
Coverage Level	Standard DVA Plan		Legacy DVA Plan	
	2026	*2027*	*2026*	*2027*
Retiree Only	$ 77	$ 83	$ 80	$ 83
Retiree and Spouse	$ 154	$ 164	$ 158	$ 164
Retiree and Child(ren)	$ 140	$ 148	$ 143	$ 148
Retiree and Family	$ 219	$ 233	$ 225	$ 233

2027 DVA Open Enrollment Guide—coverage comparisons

Educators Rising Alaska
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Invites you to play a vital role in empowering Alaska's future educators and leaders! This is a state competition that will be **held virtually on Zoom on February 16-17, 2027**. Educators Rising Alaska are looking for judges. They will offer live training twice: once in December and once in January. Their **Interest Form** needs to be filled out **by November 20th**. More will be available at our October 14th meeting at your table.

October 2026

Announcements

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The Social Security Administration (SSA) announced on Oct. 14, 2026 that Social Security beneficiaries will get a 3.6 percent increase in their monthly payments in 2027.

The 3.6 percent adjustment will boost the average monthly benefit for a retired worker by about $75 in January. The average survivor benefit for a widow or widower will go up by about $69. Read more at the following address: https://www.ssa.gov/news/en/advocates/2026-10-14.html

Medicare offers ACCESS, a way to get care that supports people with Original Medicare who have one or more chronic health conditions. You can find more information at the following Medicare website:

https://www.medicare.gov/providers-services/coordinating-care/support-chronic-health-conditions-access

Hinge Health: is offering 2 webinars, one on Oct. 7: Weight Management and Pain: Healthy Lifestyle Tips That Can Make a Difference; the other on Oct. 14: Hinge Health 101: Digital Physical Therapy for Pain Relief
Find registration information on Hinge Health website or a **direct link is in our AlaskaCare Retiree Health Sept. 2026 Newsletter.**

AlaskaCare Retiree Town Hall: Our Last 2026 Town Hall is October 15, 2026 at 10 a.m.

From AARP: Social Security recipients could see a 3.6 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) in 2027, according to an AARP analysis of current inflation data.

On Oct. 14, 2026, 2027 COLA will be announced, after the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) releases Sept. inflation data, and it takes effect with the payments beneficiaries receive in January 2027.

Public Comment Period Regarding Proposed Update to Retiree Health Plan: the proposed update is to add **licensed massage therapists as a recognized provider** type. **All Public Comments must be submitted in writing**, comments will be **accepted through 4:30 p., Alaska time on October 19, 2026**. A public teleconference regarding the process to submit comments will be held on: Thursday, Oct. 8, 2026 at 2pm Alaska time
***Teleconference #**: **(907) 202-7104** *** ID#: 451-746-2903**

September 2026

Announcements

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I learned that Lou Davies passed away Aug. 25, 2026. She was 93 Years young. Celebration of Lou's life will be held June 2027.

I also learned that on Sept 7 Asha Lal passed away in her sleep at the Pioneers Home.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to both of these families.

August 2026



NAME TAGS, step right up and use your **own**, **reusable name tag! OK? Please?** There **will not be** any incentive prizes **for August, September or October**, since I will not be at the meetings. (We'll be toodling around the Northwest in our camper.) See you in November. *Nancy Hummel*



Calypso Farm is recruiting volunteers of all ages for Fall Field Trips at the farm!
Training will take place on **August 14th** and will run from **9:30am – 12:30pm**—Sign up for our **Farm Discovery Guide training**. If you can't make this date but would still like to volunteer this season, let River Ebbesson know!
Call Calypso Farm at 907-451-0691.

Field trips will be running from August 20th – September 25th as of right now, they are all from 10am-12pm.

Learn more and register for the training session below!

calypsofarm.org/farm-discovery-program

July 2026

2026 FRTA scholarship deferment—One of our scholarship recipients, three weeks after being notified, let Judy Rae know that he was leaving in August for a two year church mission in the South Pacific. (email April 22, 2026)

- No mention of this was made by recipient in his application
- The Alaska Scholars program defers scholarships for one year
- The only deferment we have done since 2014 has been for a military commitment via ROTC and for less than 6 months. The recipient informed us when applying that he would have a commitment to the military immediately after graduation. The recipient was in the ROTC at BEHS and

was admitted to UAF starting spring semester of 2020 after his 2019 award selection

- **FRTA members who are NOT GOING TO ATTEND IN PERSON at our August 18, 2026 meeting are asked to email Judy Rae Smith fairbanks42girl@yahoo.com to voice their vote preference on the 2 YEAR DEFERMENT request.** A vote will be taken at the Aug. 18th meeting.

Retiree Town Hall Events – Updated Schedule for 2026
July 16, 2026 @10 a.m. and our last meeting for 2026 is Oct. 15, 2026 @ 10 a.m.

June 2026

The Alaska State Legislature passed two major education bills that became law in 2026:
House Bill 261: A sweeping K-12 education funding and policy package and
Senate Bill 23: Which established new civic education requirements for high school graduation

As I read the Retiree Health Plan Advisory Board (RHPAB) May 7, 2026 Meeting Agenda there are several RFP (Request for Proposal) listed. Here is where you can find more information:
https://drb.alaska.gov/docs/materials/rhpab/RHPAB_MeetingMaterials_20260507.pdf

How can I guarantee a specific postmark date? Do not use the blue collection boxes for **time-sensitive forms**. Go to a Post Office counter and ask for a manual hand-stamp or use Certified Mail. These options provide immediate, dated proof of mailing.

May 2026

Fairbanks Parks & Rec. Senior Recognition Luncheon, need to register to attend on Thursday, May 7, 2026 @ the Carlson Center 10am-1pm. We picked up two members from this event.

2026 Really Free Market, Saturday, May 16th @ 10am-11am with DROP OFF Items 8am-10am in the Lola Tilly Parking Lot.

April 2026

Announcements

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2026 AlaskaCare Retiree Insurance Booklet is now online at the following address https://drb.alaska.gov/docs/booklets/DB-RetireeInsuranceBooklet_WEB.pdf

21st Century Community Learning Centers Afterschool Programs is looking for additional staff to help with their program. It involves two hours of work after regular hours at FNSBSD schools. Individual staff workers work with no more than 13 school age kids at a time supervising a number of learning activities. Applicants can apply to work as many as four two hours days a week and would be paid at the rate of $25 an hour. There is much flexibility in hours and days worked. If you are interested in learning more **contact the program director, Lindsy Weaver at (907) 452-2000 X 1251.**

Medicare log in is changing to help prevent fraud and ensure you're the only one who can access your information Medicare has partnered with three leading identity verification services—ID.me, CLEAR and Login.gov. These services are all free to use. If you already use one of these trusted services with another government agency, like the IRS or Social Security, you can use your existing, ID.me, CLEAR or Login.gov account to log in to your Medicare account.

Note: At this time, you can still use your username and password from when you created your Medicare account. Eventually you will only be able to use one of the three new services listed above.

Calypso Farm is looking for volunteers who are interested in signing up for their Spring training session! **Monday, April 20th.**
Sign up here: calypsofarm.org/farm-discovery-program

Our April 8th presenter is Derik Stone speaking to us on **Scams**.

More changes coming to the Post Office (updated March 26, 2026**):**
Temporary increase of 8% will be **in effect April 26 through Jan. 17, 2027**

Priority Mail
Packages weighing 2 or more pounds will start at $11.00
Priority Mail Express
Prices will start at $35.65.
USPS Ground Advantage
Prices will start at $7.90

Forever stamp prices expected to go up – again

In July 2025 rose to 78 cents, then 2 months later it plans to raise prices again in mid-2026 but did not specify the amount.

New stamp designs:

James Yang artwork, two birds and hearts. *Released Jan. 13.*
Muhammad Ali, two stamps, with name "ALI" alternating…*Released Jan. 15*
Colorado's statehood, on its 150 anniversary joining the U.S. . *Released Jan. 24*
Writer Phillis Wheatley, first author of African descent in the American Colonies. *Released Jan. 29*
Lunar New Year, the Year of the Horse. *Released Feb. 3*
Actor Bruce Lee, first Asian leading man in American movies . .*Released Feb 28*
Folk artist Harriet Powers, a quilt completed in 1898 . . .*Released Feb. 28*
Lowriders, feature cars customized to ride low. . . *Released Mar. 13*
Deep Space, two new stamps feature images captured by NASA's James Webb Space Telescope: one the Crab Nebula, the other a composite image of two galaxies 80 million light-years from earth. *Release date to be announced*

March 2026

Need to Find A Network Provider in several fields, use:
https://drb.alaska.gov/retiree/healthplans.html#network

To view your DRB Statements & Documents: 1. Visit https:/myrnb.alaska.gov/

2. Sign in using your myAlaska username and password. (if you don't have a myAlaska username and password, you will need to establish these prior to using myRnB)
3. Once signed in, you will be taken to the myRnB portal page.
4. If this is your first time logging on to myRnB, you need to verify your Last Name, Date of Birth, and the Last 4 digits of you Social Security Number, then click "Next".
5. Once successfully logged in you will see the myRnB landing page. Look to the left and Click "myDocuments" near the top of the screen. Here, you will find your direct deposit confirmations titled "Warrants", annual tax documents, and other documents related to your account.
6. Be SURE TO LOG OUT, NOT just close the window.

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I am sad to report a previous member of FRTA who moved to Michigan in 2023, Audrey Copeland passed away recently. Cards can be sent to: Family of Audrey Copeland, c/o Pete Copeland, 6442 136th Ave., Saugatuk, MI 49453.

February 2026

The AlaskaCare Defined Benefit Retiree Insurance Information Booklet will be up on the State website the last of March or early April (click on the link above)

Saturday, Jan 24, 2026 I received an email from, State Coordinator of Educators Rising Alaska, Florence Scott, which was sent to 92 area Fairbanks Retired Teachers' letting them know about a need Florence has for volunteers. The competitions take place **February 4-5,** held **virtually via Zoom.** (more information is in the email I sent out)

3 Big Medicare Prescription Drug Changes Coming in 2026

➢**10 Part D drugs selected for new lower prices:**

Eliquis, for blood clot prevention and treatment

Enbrel, for rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis

Entresto, for heart failure

Farxiga, for diabetes, heart failure and chronic kidney disease

Fiasp and NovoLog, types of insulin for diabetes

Imbruvica, for blood cancers

Januvia, for diabetes

Jardiance, for diabetes, heart failure and chronic kidney disease

Stelara, for psoriasis, psoriatic arthritis, Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis

Xarelto, for blood clot prevention and treatment

➢**Out-of-pocket drug costs will be capped at $2,100**

The maximum Part D deductible will also increase in 2026, to $615, up from $590 in 2025.

➢**Medicare to cut cost of popular weight-loss drugs**

Medicare beneficiaries enrolled in part D prescription plans through either original Medicare or Medicare Advantage will see GLP-1 weight-loss drugs available at $50 a month for those who quality.

5 Changes Coming to the Post Office in 2026

Announcements

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1 Pay more for shipping

On Jan. 18, the price of several postal services will increase

➢**Priority Mail** prices will rise by 6.6% on average

➢**Priority Mail Express** prices will increase by 5.1%

➢**USPS Ground Advantage** prices will jump 7.9%

2 Forever stamp prices are expected to go up in mid-2026

3 New stamp designs celebrate art, pop culture icons, symbols of America and outer space

4 Your mail may take longer to be postmarked (see time-sensitive mail below)

5 You might not receive exact change when paying with cash (following the 1-cent coin's retirement in 2025, the USPS is rounding to the nearest nickel when pennies aren't available and customers are owed change on cash transactions.

Change amounts ending in 1, 2, 6, 7 cents are rounded down. Amounts ending in 3, 4, 8, 9 cents are rounded up. If the total is less than a nickel, the amount owed is rounded up to 5 cents.

The new round policy, was implemented on Dec. 12, 2025 and does not apply to check, debit or credit card transactions.

At our February 11th meeting the 2026 Directory will be given to those attending and will be mailed to members not able to attend.

January 2026

Our new AlaskaCare Medical Benefits begins Jan. 1, 2026.

IRMAA—if your Social Security Letter notified you about IRMAA, you can be reimbursed.

In our December meeting we received $550 for McKinney-Vento Program (our Community Service Organization) and $375 for Raven Landing kitchen and serving staff used during our meetings. Thanks for all your support during the Holidays!

Reminder AlaskaCare January Town Hall is January 15th at 10am. This year the Town Hall's are quarterly, April 16, July 16, Oct. 15, 2026, due to lack of people using the townhalls in 2025.

TEACH Fellowship 2026-2027 Teach in Taiwan, Applications Open. The TEACH Fellowship (**T**each **E**nglish **A**broad and **C**hange **H**appens) is an international teaching

fellowship organized by the Association for International Cultural and Educational Exchange (AICEE). The program placed English-speaking educators in Taiwan's K-12 public schools to support bilingual education collaborate with local teachers, and promote meaningful cultural exchange. (contact Marlin for more information)

I heard from Dale Friday, letting me know about **TIME-SENSITIVE mail**, that started Dec. 24, 2025 so if you have this type of mail:

> **You must get a manual hand-stamped POSTMARK at a post office counter or** *mail items several days early* for processing before your deadline; Certified/Registered Mail provides dated receipts but not necessarily the date of mailing.
> **In essence:** the USPS is focusing on processing efficiency, and this change clarifies that the postmark is the processing date, not a drop-off date, requiring proactive steps from you for time-sensitive mail.

December 2025

Nancy Hummel let us know: "At the November FRTA meeting, there were 10 people that wore their own personal, reusable name tags. Each got to put their name in for a chance to pick a prize. Alma was the winner for November!

At our December meeting you could be the drawing winner, if you wear your own reusable name tag (from work, other organizations, self-made. . .)

Thanks for wearing your own reusable name tag." **Nancy Hummel**

6 Significant Medicare Changes in 2026:

1 Projected Part A (individuals without sufficient work history, projected to increase to $310 or $563/month) and B (projected standard increase to $206.50/monthly premium). The Part B deductible is expected to increase to $288 next year.

2 Prescription Payment Plans will Auto-Renew

3 Drug Costs Rise: Out-of-pocket cap for Medicare Part D prescription drugs will rise to $2,100, up from $2,000 in 2025. This change means you'll pay more before reaching the catastrophic coverage threshold, so it's wise to review your plan to see how high-cost medications are covered.

Part D plans will see another hike in their maximum deductible, climbing to $615 in 2026. Keep in mind that plans can choose to have a lower deductible amount, so be sure to check your you plan provider for updated amounts.

4 Medicare Advantage Plans Face Stricter Rules on Extra Benefits (Alaska does not have Medicare Advantage Plans): What can be offered under their Special Supplemental Benefit for the Chronically III (SSBCI). In 2026, CMS will enforce a list of non-allowable items.

5 Free Vaccines Continue for Medicare Beneficiaries: Continue to offer zero cost-sharing for adult vaccines recommended by the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). This includes critical vaccines like shingles, pneumonia, and flu shots.

This benefit will remain in effect permanently. However, keep in mind that the list of covered vaccines may change each year, so always double-check before scheduling immunizations.

6 Prior Authorizations (**PA**) Coming to Original Medicare in Select States: For the first time, traditional Medicare will implement prior authorization requirements in six states—Arizona, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, and Washington-as part of the new (Wasteful and Inappropriate Service Reduction) **WISeR** Model beginning January 1, 2026. Targeting fraud/waste via AI/tech with human oversight, impacting pain management, orthopedics, and wound care, requiring more provider admin but aiming to save money and improve care by stopping low-value treatments, a major shift for Traditional Medicare.

This initiative will use technology to speed up authorization for select services. Importantly, final decisions will be made by licensed clinicians, not AI systems. While some may view this as added red tape, the goal is to reduce wasteful or unnecessary procedures while protecting taxpayer dollars.

AlaskaCare Town Hall is Dec. 18, 2025 @ 10am lasts 1 hour. **Starting in 2026 there will be only 4 meeting:** January, April, July and October, still happening the 3rd Thursday, due to a decrease in the number of retirees joining the Town Halls.

On the tables this month we will have an envelope for McKinney-Vento Program, our Christmas Community Service project and an envelope for Raven Landing staff for their special attention during our meetings.

November 2025

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FRTA's Community Service project this year **is the McKinney-Vento Program** Judy Rae will have envelopes on the table both this month and Dec. for your donation(s). Here is what Chelsea and her staff at McKinney-Vento have decided to put together "**Moments of Joy" family kits.** The kit would include passes to The Fairbanks Children's Museum, Fly Trampoline Park and a card game or board game for each family of the students McKinney-Vento Program serves. Chelsea would happily accept any donations for these kits including money donation or family card games or board games. **Bring your donations to our Dec. meeting and we will transport items to Chelsea at McKenney-Vento Program at the school district.**

Open enrollment for Dental, Vision, Audio
https://drb.alaska.gov/events/dvaenrollment.html

COLA for 2026 has a 2.8% (or 0.028) increase Starting January 2026. If you have a My Social Security account, you can view your COLA notice online in your message center starting around **November 19, 2025.** SSA begins mailing official notices in early December 2025, which will detail your new benefit amount.

Medicare's Income Related monthly Adjustment Amount, **IRMAA,** is based on your 2024 tax return to find your Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) and using projected 2026 brackets and surcharges. The official 2026 IRMAA amounts will be released in the fall of 2025 via your **Social Security account** and a notice in the mail (3rd week in Nov.), so you will not know your exact increase until then.

AlaskaCare Town Hall is Nov. 20, 2025 @ 10am lasts 1 hour.

October 2025

Linda Hull's Celebration of Life is 2pm-4:30pm Oct. 4, 2025, at the Fairbanks Pioneer Park Museum.

A change in our **Oct. program** due to a scheduling conflict with Chelsea Taylor, McKinney-Vento Foster Care Program Coordinator **changed to**:

Wednesday, October 8, 2025—**Stacy Kennedy, Director** and **Kristan Kelly**, **School Counselor-Fall Semester**, from **North Star College** who will give us some helpful information.

AlaskaCare Town Hall is Thursday Oct. 16, 2025

➤At the Town Hall we learned **the State of Alaska approved the 2026 Update to the AlaskaCare Defined Benefit Retiree Health Plan** and the **Standard Dental-**

Vision-Audio (DVA) Plan. [To find your DVA Plan for 2025, look at the bottom of your Delta Dental Card, either **Legacy Plan** or **Standard Plan** is listed.]

From the State—2026 Proposed updates to the AlaskaCare Defined Benefit **Retiree Health Plan** and the Standard Dental-Vision-Audio (DVA) Plan.

➤To allow Plan coverage for foreign ground ambulance services

➤Reintroduce Teladoc as a provider option

➤Update to remove member coinsurance for diagnostic colonoscopies received in-network

Update the following under the **Standard Dental-Vision-Audio Plan (DVA)**

➤Increase coverage from 2 to 4 prophylaxis, scaling, and periodontal maintenance visits per calendar year, and remove Delta Dental's Oral Health Total Health program.

➤Allow coverage for 3D dental imaging once per calendar year.

➤Increase the allowance for the topical application of fluoride from 2 times per calendar year based on age criteria, to 4 times per calendar year with no age limit. Remove current eligibility criteria for sealant application, sealant repair, preventive resin restoration in a moderate to high carries risk patient for a permanent tooth and allow once per tooth per year for each service.

➤Reduce the crown frequency limit from once per tooth every 7 years, to once per tooth every 5 years, and update the reimbursement allowance from the allowable amount for a **metal crown**, up to the allowable amount for a **porcelain crown**.

https://drb.alaska.gov/news/2025/0820-notice.html This is where the Proposals and Summaries for our 2026 updates to the AlaskaCare Defined Benefit **Retiree Health Pan and Standard DVA Plan** are located.

State is using postal mail to send us the 2026 DVA Comparison Guide.

DVA Open Enrollment—Starts Nov. 5-26, 2025.

September 2025

Saturday, September 13 @ 714 3rd Ave. downtown—Rotary is celebrating 60 years of service and friendship! Since FRTA presented a program or had another connection with our club in the past, we'd love for you to join us—and invite others from FRTA. 2025 will be a **"blast from the past" as Rotary Rocks the '60s!** Music by

the **South Cushman Social Club** and dance the night away. Tickets are **$30** and available at AKtickets.com.

September Town Hall is Thursday, September 18, 2025 at 10am.

August 2025

Notice of Proposed updates to the AlaskaCare Defined Benefit Retiree Health Plan and Standard Dental-Vision-Audio Plan—Published Aug. 20, 2025 for 1 month online Sept. 20, 2025. All comments must be received no later than 4:30pm on Sept 19, 2025. Website: https://aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/Notices/View.aspx?id=220539

Website for proposals and summaries is:
https://drb.alaska.gov/news/2025/0820-notice.html

We received word that Linda Hull passed away in July. **Her Celebration of Life 2pm-4:30pm on Oct. 4, 2025 at the Fairbanks Pioneer Park Museum.**

The Fairbanks Daily NewsMiner, on Monday, August 18, 2025, reported that the School District lost close to $80,000 due to unpaid breakfast/lunches over 2024-2025 school year. On Tuesday, August 19, Dr. Luke Meinert sent a letter out to parents explaining in more detail about the short fall with student meals. He stated that your donation can make a real difference if we are in a position to help. Donations can be directed district-wide or to a specific school of your choice.

How to Donate:

Online:
Visit https://ak-fairbanksnorthstar-lite.intouchreceipting.com/NSCDonations
Choose to support the **district as a whole or a specific school**

In-Person:
Bring **cash or check donations** to one of the following locations:

Nutrition Servies Main Office: 1305 Charles Street
Any lunch-serving school: Visit the **kitchen manager**, who can accept your donation and ensure it is applied to that school's meal account

Calypso Farm is gearing up for Fall field trips and they are hoping that you'll be interested in becoming a Farm Discovery Guide this year!

They have two training options for new and returning guides:

Monday, August 18th from 9am to 12pm **OR**
Wednesday, August 20th from 9am to 12pm

At the end of the training, they'll share their volunteer sign up for Fall Field Trips. They run August 26th through September 30th, and happen Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday from 10am – 12pm with occasional afternoon sessions.
To learn more and sign-up for one of the trainings, visit:
https://calypsofarm.org/farm-discovery-program/

August Town Hall is this Thursday, August 21. This will **Spotlight the Proposed** AlaskaCare Retiree Health Plan and Standard DVA Plan's dental **benefit changes for 2026** from 10am to 11am this Thursday**. You need to register in order to get a phone call from AlaskCare. (more information in May 2025 scroll down)**

We are happy to announce that we have a contract for our 2025-2026 meetings at Raven Landing in the dining room. The cost will be the same as last year, $17. Checks should be made out to FRTA. Parking and access have always been a plus and the facilities accommodate us well. Our first meeting, **No school today, lunch! Tuesday, Aug. 19 at Raven Landing's dining room.**

July 2025

AlaskaCare Retire Health Plan, Health Matters, Spring 2025, Number 44 explains the new 2025 Retiree Benefits that went into effect January 1, 2025. Here is *Health Matters, Spring 2025, Number 44*.

AlaskaCare Town Hall is Thursday, July 17, 2025 at 10 am. You need to register with AlaskaCare Town Hall in order to receive the phone call for the Town Hall. (refer to May 2025 for registration of the Town Hall)

The 2025 automatic Post Retirement Pension Adjustment (PRPA) will be paid with the July check

June 2025

A heads up, USPS will raise the cost of a first-class mail **Forever stamp to 73 cents in July 13, 2025.** Other price increases for certain mail on July 13, 2025 as well.

More information: https://news.usps.com/2025/04/09/usps-recommends-new-prices-2/

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AlaskaCare Town Hall will be the 4th Thursday, June 26, 2025 at 10 a.m. due the holiday Juneteenth, June 19, 2025.

May 2025

2025 Senior Recognition Day is Thursday, May 8, 2025 at the Carlson Center. Registration closes on **Monday, March 21st**.

Voting takes place at our May 14 meeting. The Slate of FRTA Officers for 2025-2027: **President,** Marlin Collins, **Vice President,** Steve Heckman, **Secretary,** Lori Mertes, and **Treasurer,** Karen Shaner.

Did you know that as of January 1, 2025 we have a **Free Aetna Nurse Advice Line** as a new benefit. This is a 24/7 AETNA nurse line by calling (800) 556-1555. The nurse can help you with:

- Deciding whether to visit a doctor or urgent care center
- Understanding your symptoms
- Managing chronic conditions
- Learning about treatment options and medical procedures

AlaskaCare Retiree Town Hall—to register for this go to https://drb.alaska.gov/events/townhall.html an scroll down for Registration

AlaskaCare Town Hall for May 15, 2025 has the theme of Medicare with Jeanne Larson from the Alaska Medicare Information Office answering questions: https://health.alaska.gov/en/senior-and-disabilities-services/medicare-office/

Another benefit for retirees is the **Supplemental Non-Emergent Surgery Coverage** AlaskaCare has partnered with **Lantern** to offer retirees covered by the AlaskaCare Retiree Health Plan and their eligible dependents convenient travel benefits for non-emergent surgeries. You get access to a network of top-quality medical providers with proven experience in more than 350 procedure types across 40 states. For more information go to Lanterns AlaskaCare website: https://drb.alaska.gov/retiree/healthplans.html #lantern

Medicare Monday Seminars: On the second Monday of each month at noon, ,meet with the Alaska Medicare Information Office (AMIO) for a quick presentation of the *Medicare Minute*, which focuses on a specific Medicare topic. Attendees are invited to ask questions. Here are the upcoming dates and topics that will be discussed:

May 12 – Lowering Your Part D Costs

June 9 – Part B vs. Part D Drugs
July 14 – Medicare and Durable Medical Equipment (DME)
August 11 – Medicare and Employer Coverage
September 8 – Medigaps
October 13 – Fall Open Enrollment

Questions or need help registering? AMIO at (907) 269-3680 or hss.medicare@alaska.gov .

UAF to host Really Free Market, Saturday, May 17, 2025. The recycling event will be at 10 a.m. in the parking lot next to the Lola Tilly Commons. A drive-up lane for dropping off donations, and volunteers will be there to help unload donations from 8 to 10 a.m.

Our Exec. Board meeting, Wed. May 21, starts off with Stacey Kennedy, Director of North Star College in partnership with UAF. To help us and our Scholarship Committee members what it is and how it works. All interested members are welcome. We will be at 1226 Cowles Street, that address is part of Raven Landing, Building 4 in their Commons beginning at 11 a.m. until 11:45 a.m. Go to the front of Building 4, the door is not locked and the first door on the left is where we will be.

April 2025

The Alaska Medicare Information Office has a quick presentation, the second Monday of each month, called *The Medicare Minute*, which focuses on a specific Medicare topic. After the monthly topic is presented attendees can ask Questions.

This event is online through Zoom. You will receive an email with details about how to join the event once you register. These are the upcoming dates and topics that will be discussed during the Medicare Monday seminars:

April 14- Premium-related Appeals and Troubleshooting
May 12- Lowering your Part D Costs
June 9- Part B vs. Part D Drugs
July 14 Medicare and Durable Medical Equipment (DME)

Zoom Event: Need Help Through the Medicare Maze? April 23- 5:30-7:00pm
Interested about the basics of Medicare. The Alaska Medicare Office will go over the basics of Medicare A, B, C, D. Medigap (Medicare Supplements), and how to protect yourself from Medicare fraud and abuse. This presentation is approximately one hour followed by a 30-minute Q&A session.

Announcements

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Have questions or need help registering? Contact the Medicare Information Office at (907) 269-3680 or hhs.medicare@alaska.gov. You can also visit their website and calendar for more information.

March 2025

On **March 5, 2025, Wednesday,** members affected by the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) began receiving their **one-time retroactive payment, deposited** into the bank account Social Security Administration has on file for you.

The one-time retroactive **payment will date back to January 2024**, the month when WEP and GPO no longer applied.

Social Security benefits are paid one month behind, so **most affected beneficiaries will begin receiving their new monthly benefit amount in April 2025** (for their March 2025 benefit).

Remember there are **3 areas the Social Security Fairness Act might effect:**

2025 **Taxes** that we will file in 2026
Your SSA 1099 Form for 2025 (will have this information)

Medicare Premiums by moving RETIREES into a higher tax bracket, potentially trigger IRMAA surcharges

IRMAA is based on a two-year lookout, the 2025 increase could **affect premiums starting in 2027**

I put 2 documents on your table, **one from Kiplinger,** the **other document** begins with: **Social Security update Mar. 3 on the Fairness Act**

Since 1980 the **Alaska Health Fair** is an organization providing health education and affordable blood screenings. Last year AlaskaCare did not provide Retirees the Health Fairs as we had expected. I am providing another alternative, the Alaska Health Fair website, (alaskahealthfair.org) when you scroll down you can see individual testing prices and both a Men's and Women's Wellness Package with both of these prices listed.

Scrolling down further is the Location, Date & Time, event Address, & Make Appointment with a link to click.

2025 Senior Recognition Day is Thursday, May 8, 2025. Registration begins on **Friday, March 21st** online or by phone at (907) 450-1070.

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AlaskaCare Town Hall—March 20th at 10am and April 17th at 10am

February 2025

The Alaska Community Foundation has a new ***Giving Hub for Don Dewitt's Scholarship.*** The address is**:**
https://alaskacf.fcsuite.com/erp/donate/create/fund?funit_id=1240

Social Security Fairness Act: Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO) **update website**:
https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/social-security-fairness-act.html?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery&tl=2

As of Feb. 3, 2025, SSA is finalizing its plan to implement the Act. No estimated timeframe is available. On the above website, SSA will continue to provide update.

Our NEW **AlaskaCare Retiree Health Plan** went into effect January, 1, 2025. The 2025 AlaskaCare Defined Benefit Retiree Insurance Information Booklet is online https://drb.alaska.gov/docs/booklets/DB-RetireeInsuranceBooklet_WEB.pdf

Alaska Care Town Hall—Feb. 20, 2025 @ 10am

January 2025

Sarah Perez with Literacy Council of Alaska is in need of volunteers to mentor clients. Literacy Council is on 517 Gaffney Road, phone 907 456-6212.

New AlaskaCare Retiree Health Plan information Booklet goes into effect January 1, 2025. Proposed booklet website:
https://drb.alaska.gov/docs/booklets/AlaskaCare_RetireeDBBooklet_2025_FinalCandidate_PublicComment.pdf

Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amount (IRMAA) Reimbursement is ready for your Enrollment Form. This is the Alaska Retiree IRMAA website address that has information on the process:
https://drb.alaska.gov/retiree/healthplans.html#retireeirmaa

Now with the repeal of WEP/GOP the question is: **When will I get my Social Security benefits restored?** Steps need to be taken to recalculate Social Security benefits for roughly 2.8 million retired education employees and other public workers around the country. That may take some time, but that process starts as

soon as President Biden signs the bill and the implementation date is reached. When **enacted into law,** the Social Security Fairness Act **makes payments retroactive to January 2024. (An estimate by** the **Congressional Budget Office expects recipients** who were **affected by the Windfall Elimination Provision** that their **monthly benefits to increase** by an average of $360 by December. ~source NPR, January 6, 2025, Juliana Kim)---Social Security needs you to make sure your mailing address and direct deposit information are up to date. You can do this by checking your profile or signing up for, MySocialSecurity.

December 2024

On Friday Dec. 20, the Senate voted 76-20 to pass *The Social Security Fairness Act* *(*H.R. 82) by **repealing the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO)**. The House passed the Bill by an overwhelming majority of 327-75. **President Biden signs H.R. 82 on Sunday, Jan. 5, 2025.**

Notice of Proposed Updates to the **2025 AlaskaCare Retiree Health Plan Booklet** which have been posted for public comment

https://drb.alaska.gov/news/2024/1130-notice.html

All comments must be received no later than 4:30 p.m. AK Time on Dec. 30, 2024

You may comment on the proposed updates by submitting written comments:

By Mail: State of Alaska Department of Administration
Division of Retirement and Benefits
PO Box 110203
Juneau, AK 99811-0203

By Email: doa.drb.alaskacare.retiree.plan@alaska.gov

A public teleconference will be held Dec. 11, 2024 at 2 p.m. AK Time
Teleconference # 907 202-7104 ID# 537 078 063

AlaskaCare Town Hall for December is next Thursday, December 19, 2024 @ 10am

November 2024

This is the month, November, we receive our Social Security Letters please read very carefully since **you might be informed** that you are in the **I**ncreased **R**elated

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Monthly **A**djustment **A**mounts. **If you are subject to the Medicare Part D IRMAA surcharge, you can be reimbursed.**

https://drb.alaska.gov/retiree/healthplans.html#retireeirmaa discusses IRMAA and what you need to do for reimbursement

Social Security—Cost-of-Living Adjustment Announced for 2025 COLA Set at 2.5% for 2025, the lowest since 2021—COLA will bump up estimated average Social Security retirement benefit by $49 starting in January 2025

AlaskaCare Town Hall for November is next Thursday, November 21, 2024 @ 10am

October 2024

AlaskaCare Town Hall for October is 4th Thursday, October 24, 2024 @ 10am

AlaskaCare Health Matters, Fall 2024 Retiree Edition—Oct. 15, 2024
https://drb.alaska.gov/news/2024/0943-healthmattersRE.html

The Latest DRB NEWS—A good website up-to-date information for Retiree's

Open Enrollment for members with DVA benefits begin **Oct 14, 2024 thru November 27, 2024**. This has to do with your **DENTAL BENEFITS**. There are **two PLAN options with different DENTAL coverage provisions**: the Legacy Plan and the Standard Plan. Visit **AlaskaCare.gov/DVA** to review your DVA coverage and make benefit elections during this time. If you are satisfied you do not have to do anything.

Visit AlaskaCare.gov/DVA on October 14th to participate in DVA Open Enrollment and ends November 27, 2024.

September 2024

Proposed Updates to AlaskaCare Defined Benefit (DB) Retiree Health Plan: The AK Dept. of Admin. is working with the Retiree Health Plan Advisory Board (RHPAB) to review updates to both the (DB) Retiree Health Plan and Standard DVA Plan—

- Update to eligible acupuncture services
- Addition of Preventive First Program and increase to Annual Maximum Benefit for Standard Dental Plan
- Addition of Vision Service Plan (VSP) Network to Standard Vision Plan

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The proposals and summaries are available on the Retiree Health Plan Advisory Board webpage for review. **Beginning September 1, 2024,** you may comment on the proposed updates by submitting written comments **through 4:30 pm Alaska time on Sept 30, 2024.**

- **By Mail:** State of Alaska Department of Administration Division of Retirement and Benefits P.O. Box 110203
- **By Email**: doa.drb.alaskacare.retiree.plan@alaska.gov

Public teleconference will be held Thursday, Sept. 19th, at 3pm Teleconference # (907) 202-7104 ID# 504 292 414#

Upcoming Retiree Health Plan Advisory Board Meeting

Date: September 12, 2024, 9 a.m. – 3 p. m.
Location: Video Teleconference | Anchorage Atwood 19th Floor Conference Room
Conference #: (907) 202-7104
ID#: 465 999 308#
Microsoft Teams Meeting

McKinney-Vento Program After the August meeting Judy Rae took a laundry basket packed full of school supplies from Sherry Barrett and Naomi King. They bought out every supply sale around town, and the items completely filled the cart the McKinney-Vento staff brought down to collect the donation. All school supplies have been distributed. In addition to the goods donated, $435 was donated for their discretionary fund use. They were overwhelmed.

For our September meeting, Sept. 11, 2024, McKinney-Vento is in need of winter gear for all levels of students: hats, gloves, or donations for purchase of additional winter gear.

FRTA Scholarships: As of the August 13th Executive Board Meeting, all five scholarship recipients had filed their paperwork and had the checks sent to their schools. The schools represented are UAF, Oregon State University, Colorado State University, Belmont Abbey University, and Texas A & M.

August 2024

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Mentors needed—If you are interested in this you need to email Shaun Kraska mailto:shaun.kraska@k12northstar.org as soon as possible. Let Shaun know your interest and what your area of expertise is.

For our new members—AlaskaCare holds Town Hall meetings every 3rd Thursday @ 10 a. m. each month, lasting one-hour. You may call into the Town Hall meetings to ask your question. If you Register in Advance for the Town Hall meetings, AlaskaCare calls you automatically.

August Town Hall will take place August 15 @ 10 a. m. and lasts one hour. Questions about our Retiree Benefits this is the place to have your questions answered.

Fairbanks Fall Health Fair status and report—In July 2024 AlaskaCare Retiree Health News---Retirees were informed that the Pacific Health Coalition will no longer offer retiree plans members access to Coalition-organized health fairs beginning Fall 2024.

Tricia Brown author of *The Queen of Fairbanks (Irene Sherman)* will be at Noel Wien Library signing her book(s) from 1pm through 2:30pm on Saturday, August 17, 2024.

Changes to Access your Social Security Account is transitioning to a Login.gov to sign-in rather than SS username and password.

Postage Stamp going up Sunday, August 11, 2024 are going up 5 cents to 73 cents.

July 2024

Marilyn Nigro, Steve Heckman, Lori Mertes, Karen Shaner and Marlin Collins conducted an internal audit of FRTA Funds on Wednesday July 17, 2024.

We started July 2023 with a beginning balance of $22,977.91 and ended June 2924 with an ending balance of $30,919.07.

Karen let the committee know that of the five $2,500 scholarships awarded, one has cleared the bank and 4 are outstanding.

The audit was successfully completed without exception.