

On January 10, 2009, an extremely cold Saturday morning, about 500 people showed at the new DeNa'ina Center to meet with legislators for one issue, returning to a Defined Benefit (DB) Retirement system for Alaska's public employees. You may wonder.....did that change anything? If I came, did that matter?

Everyone in the audience was of one mind, and almost all the legislators in attendance professed to be solidly behind a return to DB. What was accomplished?

The legislators learned that a defined benefit is important to public employees, that they will turn out for this cause, and that having a secure retirement is an issue they will fight for. Like all of us, they have more things to do than they can ever get done in one session. Saturday's turnout showed them that their constituents are watching and want action on this issue.

Testimony by AEA members and other public employees as to how the Defined Contribution (DC) plan has negatively impacted them provided ammunition to legislators as they return to Juneau and work with other legislators that are either not convinced yet or oppose a DB plan.

Johnny Ellis, Bill Wielechowski, Kevin Meyer, Les Gara, Harry Crawford, Hollis French, and Berta Gardner all showed and all indicated strong support for DB. Charisse Millet, newly elected, but not (then) sworn in also attended. She has not said yet where she stands on this issue, but sat for the whole time. All of them deserve our thanks for coming and taking time to listen.