

President's Message for June 2018 by Richard C. Warbrouck

The Seattle Firefighters Union, Local 27 is making the final plans and arrangements as host of the 2018 International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) Convention. The convention will be here in Seattle from August 6th to August 10th 2018. This convention is special as this is also the 100th year anniversary of the IAFF. In our April Newsletter we featured a photograph taken in 1978 of myself and Ed Wedikend, a former Seattle firefighter and Charter Member of Local 27 and the IAFF. Mr. Wedikind was 91 years old when I located him here in Seattle. I was able to escort him to the 1978 IAFF Convention in Las Vegas as a guest of the IAFF.

The host hotels are the Westin and Sheraton Hotels in downtown Seattle. There will be several events scheduled, some open to retired firefighters and other guests. There will also be a need for volunteers. If you would like to volunteer please contact Local 27 at 206-285-1271. We will try to post dates and times that volunteers will be needed.

One main event that will get attention is a boat cruise to Alaska. I don't have the dates, the itinerary or the cost at this time. I hope to receive a flier and will send out more information as the time gets closer. Unfortunately we don't have a July Newsletter so we will have to post any new information on our website or forward by email.

If you are in need of any additional information or have any questions please contact:
Joanna Kerber, Executive Assistant/Event planner Local 27:
Phone: 206-285-1271
Cell: 206-276-4215
Follow details on Facebook: IAFFLOCAL27.2018Seattle
Twitter: Seattle 2018
IAFF website: <https://convention2018.iaff.org>

I had the pleasure of presenting a check for \$1,000.00 to Local 27 President Kenny Stewart to share in the cost of a hospitality room on behalf of the membership of the Retired Firefighters of Washington (RFFOW).

It is part of my responsibility to keep you or your spouse informed to the best of my ability on all issues that could affect you as a member and as a retired firefighter or surviving spouse. I must look to the future to protect the RFFOW as an organization and all law enforcement officers and firefighters active and retired. Whatever we stop, amend or gain in Olympia effects all.

It would be like a manager of a large building disregarding a major foundation failure until the building falls down. I guess our future representation is not too exciting because our building, the RFFOW is not leaning severely or ready to fall down but it does show signs of deterioration. Over the years when we maintained a membership of 2000-2100 members, about 25% of the LEOFF I members. We were quite stable. We have for years been the most successful and active Retiree Association in the State. As I said before, and I know I'm preaching to the choir. We have had 19 bills passed since

2000 to enhance the pension system. We were the first group to ring the bell on all three retirement merge bills. We have stopped or amended several bad retirement bills included in the last session when we were successful with the help of WSCFF in amending HB 2719. I believe our amendment when passed killed the bill.

No other organization attended a hearing or testified on the bill even though one organization has a mission that states "TO PROTECT THE INTEGRITY OF THE LEOFF I SYSTEM."

HB 2719 if passed would have opened the door to a State or County Prior Act pension board and a countywide or State LEOFF I Disability Board, eliminating city boards. We must be diligent. We can't just be in Olympia on a weekly or bi-weekly basis only talking to a receptionist in a legislator's office.

Can we continue? I doubt it. Our membership is diminishing to about 1,000. Even if we can continue, is it right or equitable for 1,000 retirees to pay the freight for 7,300 LEOFF I retirees? We have cut the fat, we are now cutting into the muscle. Our members pay their dues and many of you send in legislative contributions to allow us to attend candidate fundraisers to educate candidates running for office or legislators running for re-election. This is a vital part of any legislative program. The other 6,300 LEOFF I retirees who don't pay one dime unless they belong to a social group. Most of these social groups don't forward contributions to candidates or legislators running for office. In fact, last month when I asked for \$20 or \$25 donations to offset a major cost of mailing to all 7,300 LEOFF I members and maybe the 8,000 LEOFF II retirees to discuss our future retiree representation, I received \$960 in donations from our members. I want to thank each of you who responded with a donation. If we fail to do a large mailing we will refund your donations.

The reason I address all of this again is to emphasize the need for us to look to the future to have an organization capable of protecting our retirement and medical benefits. Due to our efforts and accomplishments the RFFOW is looked upon as the main lobbying group for the LEOFF I members. This cannot and should not continue. Our membership is declining. I have addressed this problem many times over the past six months in our Newsletters. The problem is that only our members receive the Newsletters except for a few comp Newsletters that are sent out to fire stations and other organizations this is why a mass mailing to all retirees and surviving spouses is necessary.

I have to ask if it is fair and equitable for 1,000 RFFOW members to do the work and pay the cost to protect and watch over the LEOFF I Retirement System. I can't believe that the vast majority of the 7,300 LEOFF I members would not pay \$50.00 or \$60.00 a year to protect our Retirement System. Five dollars a month is cheap insurance to protect your retirement benefits for you and your spouse, along with your medical benefits and long term care.

I have been discussing this issue with a few groups around the State and with Ken Crowder, Retired Deputy Snohomish County Sheriff and Jerry Taylor, Retired Seattle Police Officers Association. I have addressed several options, dues structures and administrative options. Now it's time to send a mailing out to all 7,300 LEOFF I and maybe LEOFF II police and fire members to get some feedback, suggestions and questions. We would have to do the first mailing through the Department of Retirement Systems which would be quite expensive. DRS will not give us addressed or phone numbers of members but they will do a supervised mailing to all members. The cost for DRS to do the mailing list and the postage, envelopes, stationery, printing, the mailing service and the folding and stuffing of the envelopes will be expensive. The cost will be our responsibility. Jerry Taylor has pledged a donation to offset the expenses. If a group or individual would like to forward a donation please send a check to the RFFOW 9134 207th PI SW Edmonds, WA 98026. We will deposit any money we receive in a special account with two signatures required to disburse, perhaps Jerry Taylor and Megan Girard our Administrative Assistant. We may be able to have some sort of a return form or card in the first mailing for members to send back with their address and phone number to allow us to keep you informed and simplify future mailings. At some point we can arrange meetings across the state to discuss the various issues and formats to be considered. This will require hall rents for meetings and other expenses.

It's imperative that we develop one statewide organization that is transparent with elected officers, elected district representatives, area meetings with meeting minutes and financial reports. YOUR THOUGHTS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME.

OPTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

- Development of one statewide retiree association, Police-Fire LEOFF I or LEOFF I and LEOFF II
- Develop one statewide Law Enforcement Officer Association LEOFF I or LEOFF I and LEOFF II
- Open and expand the RFFOW to include Law Enforcement officers LEOFF I or LEOFF I and LEOFF II with Law Enforcement Officers having the right to vote and hold office
- Develop a statewide Firefighter-Law Enforcement Officer Political Action Committee (PAC) with elected officers
- Retired Firefighters to affiliate with the Washington State Council (WSCFF) as a retired section
- Turn all responsibilities over to the LEOFF I Coalition

Thank you for your attention.