

Good Morning Regents, University administrators, and others gathered here this morning. In past years, I have addressed this body as Chair of the Staff Alliance or the System Governance Council. But I testify today simply as a staff member who has worked for the University for nineteen years, both at UAF and at Statewide. Think of staff as the human infrastructure.

When I started working for the university, staff had step increases that provided for increased pay based on length of service, and therefore rewarded institutional knowledge and the efficiency that comes from knowing the system in which one works.

As a staff governance leader, one of the issues that I was privileged to help bring about was the Cost of Living pay increase for non-unionized staff members. I know more than one person in this room probably remembers the many discussions on the subject. Over the course of many months, regents, administration, and staff found ways to compromise with each other. We ended up with a policy in which everyone felt their comments had been heard and respected. Did everyone get everything they wanted? Of course not. But we all had a stake in the outcome, we ended up with a policy that worked for both sides, and we all valued each other's viewpoints and contributions to the process.

Fast forward to today. Cost of Living increases have been repealed. Step increases have been repealed. The proposed FY11 staff pay increase has been reduced, and then reduced again. But even worse, staff have caught wind of decision makers for the University of Alaska saying things that either implied or said outright that we, 2/3 of the employees of this great institution, should give up our current way of handling staff issues and just unionize. The first time I heard about someone saying such a thing out loud, my jaw dropped. I felt like I'd been sucker-punched. When I heard about a similar comment made by another person, I just got sad. Sad because I thought we had an understanding. Sad because I felt devalued. Sad because it feels like I'm being told that I don't deserve to have my own stake in my own issues any longer because it's easier on someone else if I just give that up.

Shame on anyone who believes it is better for me to pay union dues so that I can give up my say to a professional organizer who has no stake in my take-home pay. The staff at this institution is a valuable resource. We deserve to be valued. When we are, our morale is high. We take pride in our institution, and our pride is reflected in our work. Sometimes we need to make sacrifices, and we do it...because we all share in the outcome of the University of Alaska.

If you value the contributions that staff make to this university, let us know. Don't make us beg for pay raises now that our safety nets have been removed. We were worth it four years ago, and we are worth it now. We don't work any less, but with the proposed staff pay increases, our money won't go as far as our families need it to. Your words and actions exemplify your thoughts. I just hope those thoughts are that you value the job that non-unionized staff does for the university in your charge.