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# Alaska Labor Relations Agency

## 2025 Annual Report

*State of Alaska  
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*Department of Labor  
and Workforce Development  
Catherine Muñoz, Commissioner*



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## Introduction

The Alaska Labor Relations Agency (ALRA) administers the Public Employment Relations Act (PERA), AS 23.05.060 - 390, for public employers and employees, including the State, municipalities and other political subdivisions, public schools, and the University. The Agency also administers the railroad labor relations laws for the Alaska Railroad Corporation, AS 23.40.070 - 260. ALRA investigates and processes petitions for certification or decertification of bargaining representatives, petitions to clarify the composition of public employee bargaining units and to amend the certification of units, and charges of unfair labor practices. The Agency enforces collective bargaining agreements, determines employee strike eligibility, and makes impasse determinations.

### 1. Board and Staff Members

Six board members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the legislature to serve on the ALRA Board. Members serve staggered three-year terms. Under AS 23.05.360(a) board members must satisfy two requirements to be appointed. “The agency must include two members with a background in management, two members with a background in labor, and two members from the general public. All members must have relevant experience in labor relations matters.” No more than three board members may be of the same political party.

Emily Jackson-Hall was reappointed to a public seat on March 1, 2025. Jennifer Yuhas was reappointed to a Labor seat on March 1, 2025.

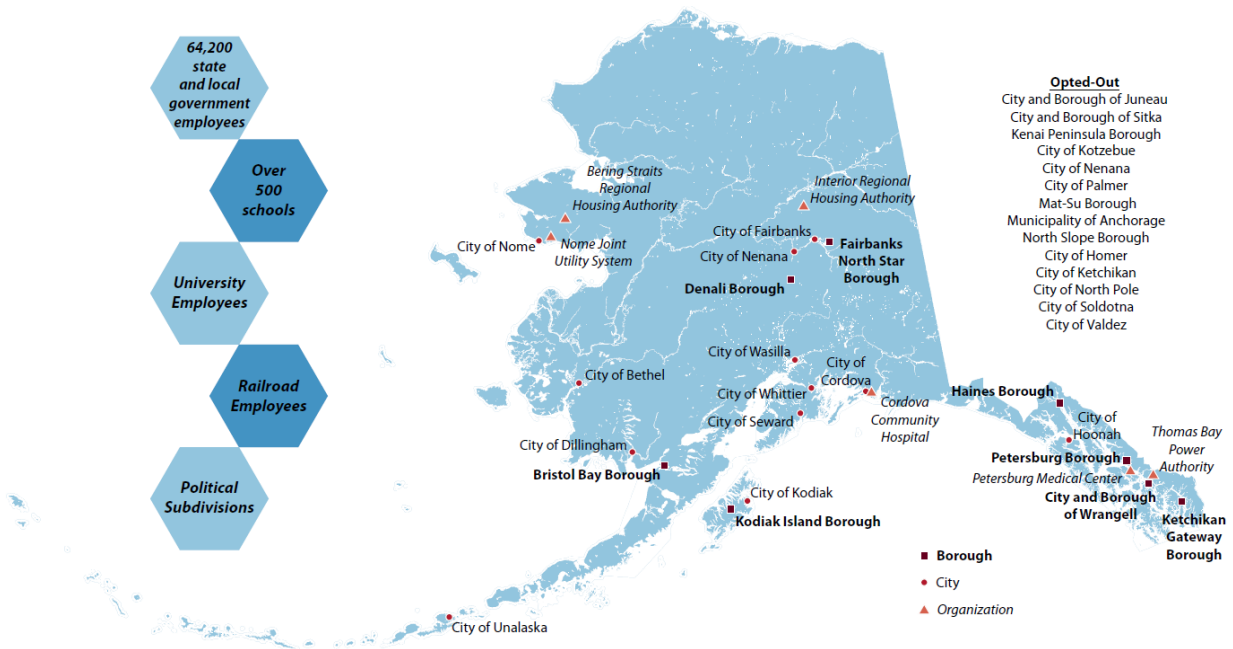
#### Board Members

Tammy Schultz, Chair	Appointed May 12, 2023	Public
Emily Hall, Vice Chair	Appointed March 1, 2025	Public
Jennifer McConnel, Member	Appointed March 1, 2023	Management
Tyler E. Andrews, Member	Appointed May 24, 2024	Management
Justin Mack, Member	Appointed March 1, 2024	Labor
Jennifer Yuhas, Member	Appointed March 1, 2025	Labor

Three full-time staff members manage the day-to-day agency operations under the direction of the Agency Administrator/Hearing Examiner. In 2025, during a vacancy, ALRA staff positions were reclassified to better reflect the nature of the work of the Agency and to address recruitment and retention issues. By April, 2025 the Agency was fully staffed.

#### Staff

Nicole Thibodeau	Administrator/Hearing Examiner II
Andrew White	Hearing Examiner I
Taylor Traugher	Labor Relations Board Assistant/Paralegal II



## 2. Jurisdiction

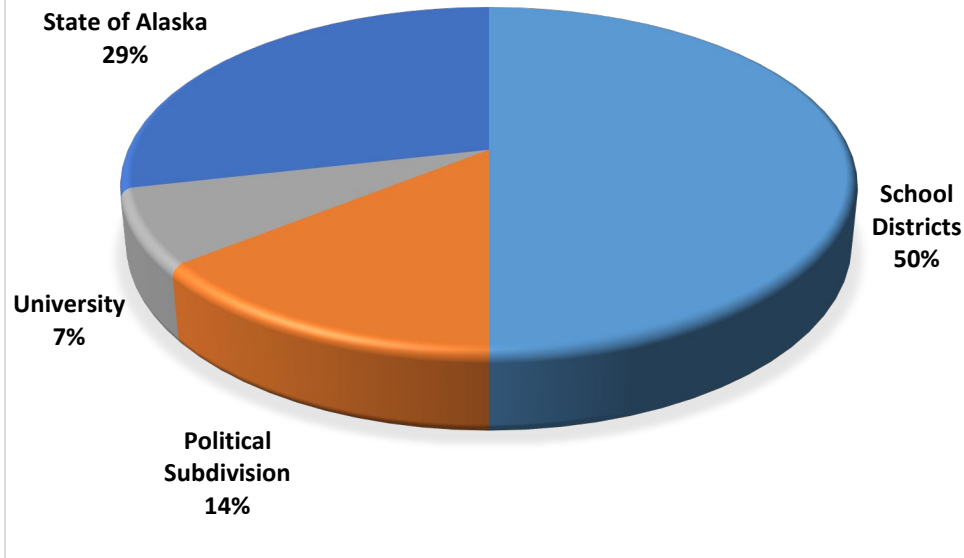
Under the Public Employment Relations Act (PERA) the Agency has jurisdiction over labor relations disputes of all state, university, railroad, public school, and political subdivisions<sup>1</sup> that have not opted out of PERA. Above is a graph illustrating ALRA's jurisdiction with known political subdivisions covered by PERA identified on the map.<sup>2</sup> Those known to have opted out of PERA are listed to the right of the map.

As a result, the Agency handles cases from all over the state. A breakdown of cases by employer type below shows how many of each type were filed in 2025.

<sup>1</sup> Because there is no mechanism by which political subdivisions inform the Agency of their PERA status, ALRA does not have a complete listing, and it is subject to change. These are the political subdivisions that are currently known to have opted in or out of PERA.

<sup>2</sup> Count of total state and local government employees is derived from the State of Alaska, Department of Labor and Workforce Development Research and Analysis monthly employment statistics for Alaska, 2024 state and local government employee annual average estimates <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/labforce/000000/01/ces.html>.

## 2025 CASES OPENED BY EMPLOYER TYPE



### Agency Activity

In 2025, ALRA hired two new staff members of the three-person agency. Staff have been working diligently to learn and train in their new roles while ensuring that there is no lapse in service.

In response to the varying abilities of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, the Agency has expanded its services to meet the needs of parties. ALRA now maintains a list of mediators and arbitrators that parties can access if they need assistance. The Agency has also launched a pilot program offering mediation services. This service is only available to parties that fall under Agency jurisdiction. Offering mediation services will fill the gap left by FMCS, and it is another way the Agency can serve both employers and unions to ensure timely dispute resolution and to avoid interruptions in government services.

The Agency also launched the Alaska Negotiation Project in 2025. The purpose of this project is to bring employer and union leaders together in order to foster better relationships and promote understanding of the law, policies, and procedures surrounding labor relations. In October, ALRA held the first of four lunch time meetings, and now has a better understanding of the needs of the labor relations population. Further trainings will work to better inform participants of the available avenues for settling disputes, and address information gaps.

In response to the Governor's Administrative Order (AO) 360, ALRA has launched a project to update its regulations. To implement AO 360, the Agency aims to eliminate unnecessary regulations and update regulations to reduce the burden on the public, streamline

operations, and modernize processes. After public opinion was solicited, the Agency put together a regulations proposal to present to the Board at the annual Board meeting in January 2026.

## **1. Adjudications**

ALRA resolves disputes through a formal adjudicative process that begins with a party filing a petition or complaint with the Agency. When a petition or complaint is filed with the Agency, staff first determine whether ALRA has jurisdiction over the matter. Then staff determine whether the petition or complaint meets the minimum filing requirements of the statutes and regulations. Depending on the type of petition or complaint filed, an investigation into the questions raised will begin. Staff may issue a decision, and all attempts are made to informally resolve the dispute between the parties. If needed, a hearing will be held before a board panel and a decision and order will be issued.

### **A. Types of cases**

Agency staff are responsible for resolving petitions for certification of a bargaining unit (RC), decertification of a bargaining unit (RD), a change in representative (RCRD), strike class determination (SC), impasse determinations (SP), unit clarification (UC), unit amendment (AC), religious exemption (RE), enforcement of collective bargaining agreements (CBA), and unfair labor practice complaints (ULP).

#### **a. Unfair Labor Practice Complaints (AS 23.40.110; AS 42.40.760; 8 AAC 97.220-250)**

Employers, labor organizations, or individual employees may file unfair labor practice (ULP) complaints (charges). Resolving unfair labor practice charges consumes a substantial percentage of the Agency's time because the issues are often complex. The process involves an investigation and research to determine whether probable cause exists then possibly a prehearing conference and a Board hearing. Like all case types, ULP case filings are unpredictable in their nature and complexity because of the unique facts of each case. Types of charges against employers include retaliation for union membership or exercise of employee rights, coercion, domination or interference with an organization, and bad faith bargaining. Charges against unions include coercion, bad faith bargaining<sup>3</sup>, and interference with the employer's selection of its representative for collective bargaining or adjustment of grievances. Often, petitions include multiple charges against a party. Additionally, employees may file duty of fair representation claims against unions if they believe the union has failed to adequately represent them.

The Agency ranks ULP's by level of priority to determine which cases are investigated first. For example, disputes that affect a large number of employees usually receive high priority. Priority level may change during the life of the case depending on specific facts and circumstances. While priority ranking affects which cases are investigated first, the nature and complexity of a ULP case and the extent of the parties' cooperation affect the time it takes to complete a ULP investigation. The Agency's ability to complete investigations timely is also

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<sup>3</sup> Bad faith bargaining charges arise in the context of collective bargaining: one party believes the other party has failed to bargain in good faith under the law.

affected when case filings rise significantly or other workload components such as elections or conducting hearings take priority.

During the investigation, if the hearing officer finds there is probable cause that a ULP violation occurred, and informal resolution<sup>4</sup> is unsuccessful, the case is scheduled for hearing. Hearings may be live or based upon the written record. A case may resolve up to or even during the hearing, but before it concludes.

No unfair labor practice charges were filed in 2025. Three ULPS closed in 2025. Of the three ULPs that closed, two settled, and one was dismissed by the superior court. The agency is currently researching ways to streamline ULP procedures.

#### b. Elections/Representation (AS 23.40.100; AS 42.40.750; 8 AAC 97.010-210)

Under AS 23.40.100 and AS 42.40.750 labor organizations, employers, or employees may file a petition to initiate a secret ballot election for certification or decertification of a labor or employee organization for collective bargaining. Alternatively, parties may notify the Agency that the employer consents to the labor organization's exclusive representation of a particular unit of employees. When this occurs, no election is required if investigation verifies the majority status of the labor organization and no current collective bargaining agreement exists. Representation cases are designated as a high priority for agency workload purposes.

Prior to conducting an election, the Agency resolves any objections raised by a party. For example, the employer may object to the composition of a bargaining unit. If a party files an objection, a hearing may be conducted before the Board, which then issues a decision and order that clarifies who gets to vote in the election. In 2025, five representation petitions were filed and one was closed. One petition resulted in an election. One petition went to the Board for hearing, the parties settled before the Board deliberated, and an election will be held in 2026. Two petitions were filed late in the year and are currently being investigated. Regarding the last petition, the parties settled after five days of mediation and an election will be held in 2026.

Petitions for recognition by mutual consent are a type of representation petition filed where the employer consents to the labor organization's exclusive representation of a particular unit of employees. There were no petitions for recognition by mutual consent filed in 2025.

Parties may also file a representation petition to decertify a unit and choose to be unrepresented. In 2025, two petitions for decertification were filed and two were closed. One was dismissed, and the other resulted in decertification of a political subdivision.

#### c. Strike Class Petitions (AS 23.40.200; AS 42.40.850)

Under PERA, the Agency hears disputes about strike classifications and impasse matters. Strike classification is important to employees and employers because it determines whether employees have the legal right to strike. PERA divides public employees into three separate classes for purposes of authorization to strike. Class I's, such as police and firefighters, are prohibited from striking. Class II's, such as snow removal workers, may strike for limited periods of time until a court determines that public safety and health are affected. Class III's, which include a wide range of public employees, have a broad right to strike. There were no strike class petitions filed or closed in 2025.

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<sup>4</sup> An effort to resolve the case informally through settlement is always made first and is required by AS 23.40.120.

d. Impasse Determinations (AS 42.40.840; 8 AAC 97.270)

Impasse determinations are conducted upon a written request by a party. During negotiations, parties may believe they have reached impasse and that continued attempts at negotiation seems unproductive. To find a way forward, parties often engage in facilitated conciliation. Agency impasse determinations are a tool parties may be required to use or may voluntarily request in their efforts to reach agreement. No impasse determinations were filed in 2025.

e. Unit Clarification and Unit Amendment Petitions (8 AAC 97.050)

Unit clarification (UC) and unit amendment (AC) petitions are filed to resolve disputes over unit composition. An employer's reorganization of its employees' duties or adding or eliminating positions can raise a question of the appropriate bargaining unit for the positions. The question of representation cannot be at issue in a unit clarification petition, and unit issues that arise in the process of handling a certification of representation petition are not counted here. Staff will conduct an investigation to determine whether these, or any other issues are present, and then issue findings. In 2025, there were no unit clarification petitions filed. One UC petition was closed in 2025. Staff investigated that matter and issued findings.

Unit amendment petitions are filed to change a unit's name, affiliation, site, or location. There were two unit amendment petitions filed in 2025 and two closed in 2025.

f. Claims for Religious Exemption (AS 23.40.225; AS 42.40.880; 8 AAC 97.310)

AS 23.40.225 and AS 42.40.880 allow a public employee to seek an exemption from union membership or agency fee payment on the basis of bona fide religious convictions. There were no claims for exemption filed in 2025. In the wake of *Janus v. AFSCME*, 138 S.Ct. 2448, (2018), it is anticipated that claims for religious exemption will no longer be filed.

g. Petitions to Enforce the Collective Bargaining Agreement (AS 23.40.210; AS 42.40.860(b); 8 AAC 97.510)

The Agency has statutory authority to enforce the terms of a collective bargaining agreement. Under the statute, all agreements must contain a grievance/arbitration procedure, which the parties must exhaust before filing a petition to enforce the agreement (CBA). There was one CBA petition that closed in 2025. No petitions were filed in 2025.

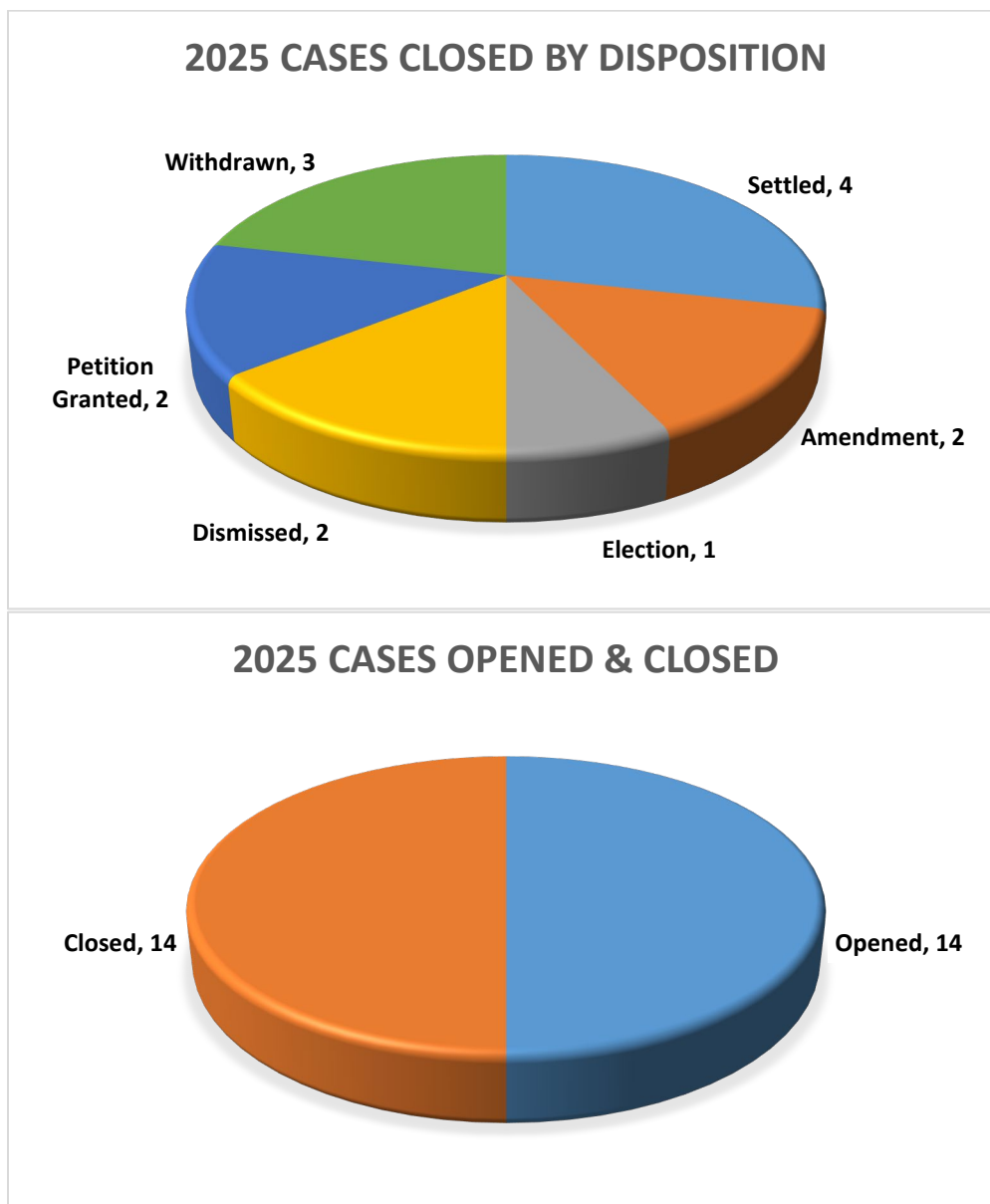
h. Mediations (AS 23.40.190; AS 42.40.840; 8 AAC 97.270)

In 2025, the Agency began offering standalone mediation services. Previously, ALRA would only mediate cases that were already open before the Agency. By offering standalone mediations, ALRA is able to better fulfill its statutory obligations and its mission under AS 23.40.070, "to promote harmonious and cooperative relations between government and its employees and to protect the public by assuring effective and orderly operations of government." This service fills a gap left by the restructuring of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service and works to divert cases from other more resource intensive forms of dispute resolution,

like hearings. Five mediation requests were filed in 2025. Four were closed. Four of the requests were for grievance mediation and one request was for contract mediation. Two mediations resolved with signed agreements resolving the grievances, one request was withdrawn prior to mediation, one matter reached impasse and proceeded to arbitration, and one matter remains ongoing with further mediation scheduled.

## 2. Summary of Agency activity

In 2025, the Agency closed a total of 14 cases, and 14 petitions and complaints were filed. In addition, 42 orders were issued in 2025. In 2025, the Board held two business meetings.





### **3. Informal Resolution**

With an emphasis on informal resolution, agency staff conduct formal and informal mediation in all types of cases which can result in settlement. Specifically, AS 23.40.120 and 8 AAC 97.230 apply to ULP cases and require the hearing officer to attempt to resolve the dispute through the use of conference, conciliation, and persuasion. Under AS 23.40.120, if the Agency determines after preliminary investigation that probable cause exists in support of a complaint or accusation, it will attempt to eliminate the prohibited practice by informal methods of conference, conciliation, and persuasion. Sometimes, with the parties' consent, the Agency may attempt to resolve a complaint or accusation by method of conference, conciliation, and persuasion before a preliminary investigation finds probable cause exists in support of the complaint or accusation. In 2025, the Agency used conference, conciliation, and persuasion to attempt to resolve three unfair labor practice cases. Agency staff engaged in five full days of conciliation in one representation matter to successfully defer it from a hearing and resolve the disputed issues.

### **4. Summary of Decisions and appealed cases**

Few cases go all the way to a hearing before a board panel and include a decision and order. In 2025, one case, *Bristol Bay Education Association, NEA-Alaska, and NEA v. Bristol Bay Borough School District*, 25-1805-RC, formally advanced to the Board for hearing. After the hearing, the parties settled before the Board deliberated and issued a decision. Separately, another case that was on appeal to the superior court was dismissed in 2025, *Totten v. Alaska State Employees Association*, 23-1879-ULP. There, the hearing officer issued findings, the complainant appealed to the Board, the Board affirmed the hearing officer's findings, and the complainant appealed to the superior court.

### **5. Training**

The ALRA Board is supported by three staff members who manage the day-to-day business of the Agency. Staff provide the Board with legal advice and information and also provide information to the public and parties. It is important that the Board and staff members participate in continuing education to allow a professional and objective response to the myriad of complex and ever-evolving labor relations issues that come before the Agency. Training provides information and tools that increase the Board and staff's ability to produce a quality work product for the public.

In 2025, the hearing examiner attended the Northwest Labor and Employment Relations Association (LERA) meeting in Seattle, Washington. ALRA is now a co-sponsor of the Northwest LERA which means the Agency contributes to planning the content to ensure there is content specifically relevant to Alaska practitioners. All staff participated in several online trainings including presentations on labor relations issues offered by the American Bar Association (ABA), Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service (FMCS), as well as courses offered by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). All staff participated in the Association of Labor Relations Agencies virtual meeting.

In 2025 the newly hired hearing examiner attended the National Judicial College's 40-hour online program on Civil Mediation.

## **6. Summer Externship**

There are now two avenues available for law student interns to follow to intern at the Agency. First, law students could apply through the Seattle University School of Law as part of its externship program. This program, started in 2008, as a combined effort by Seattle University School of Law, Alaska Pacific University, and government entities to provide legal experience and training to law students. Second, law students could apply directly to the Agency or through the intern program at the Department of Law.

The intern program encourages law students to consider relocating to Alaska and working in labor relations law or other legal fields. The Agency has received positive reviews from participating students and from Seattle University School of Law's program director. This program allows the extern to explore public-sector labor relations laws; conduct labor relations research; write legal memoranda; read and digest opinions, briefs, and motions; write summaries of published agency decisions; and confer with agency staff on performing other technical duties they may encounter as new lawyers. In 2025, ALRA hosted a law student intern from Seattle University School of Law for ten weeks over the summer. By expanding the intern program and working with the Department of Law, the Agency is able to provide a more robust internship opportunity to students including participation in a mock trial before an Alaska Superior Court judge at the courthouse. ALRA's 2025 law student intern is returning to Alaska in fall of 2026 to clerk for the Alaska Superior Court.

## **7. Outreach**

Agency staff provide information about the Public Employment Relations Act (PERA) to new and existing representatives from public employee labor organizations and public employers and distinguish it from the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). As part of their discussions with new representatives, ALRA staff provide a history of the evolution of public labor relations in Alaska and at the Agency, provide instruction on how to file documents with the agency, and share insight gained through their experience at the Agency. They emphasize the importance of parties developing and maintaining good relationships, particularly after they experience long, difficult negotiations.

In 2025, the Agency fielded labor relations questions, including at least 279 general public inquiries. Of those, 84 were regarding PERA and were unrelated to any open matter, and 195 of those were general inquiries from the public unrelated to any open matter. The Hearing Examiner II served on two presenter panels in 2025: Northwest LERA and the American Bar Association.

## **Resources**

The Agency provides information on its website, accessible through the State of Alaska's home page at [www.alaska.gov](http://www.alaska.gov) or directly at <https://labor.alaska.gov/laborr/>. The site contains

petitions, complaints, and instructions for filing. It also has a link for contacting the Administrator by e-mail, information about Agency programs and resources, and access to Agency decisions. New in 2025, the Agency has a list of arbitrators and mediators on its website. The Agency continues to add new materials to the website and welcomes public suggestions.

ALRA maintains a resource library accessible to the public, containing printed copies of public-sector labor relations publications, printed copies of Agency decision and orders, and printed copies of election certificates. Patrons are encouraged to call the office first to ensure the library is not already in use.