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An Information Pipeline for Members and

Friends of Local 17





On the Cover:

On Feb. 26, union members throughout the country organized a Day of Action as the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the *Janus v. AFSCME* case. Here, Union Representative and Local 17 member Lorelei Walker stands in support of public sector employees and their right to unionize. Read more on page 4. ■

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Choosing public service

In my nearly six years on staff at Local 17, I've had the opportunity to interview members all across the Northwest for this magazine, and the one question I always ask is: *what do you like best about your job?* There has yet to be a member who doesn't mention – in some form or another – their commitment to doing work that is meaningful and serves their communities. This is the essence of public service – contributing your skills to the greater good.

As you'll see in this issue, we have a plethora of members who are dedicated to making the world a better place. Our members at the City of Seattle are leading the country in green initiatives – including installing the City's first public electric car charging station – with an aim to reduce carbon emissions from city traffic (p. 9). In Skagit County, our GIS specialists are optimizing maps and information to help improve everything from government efficiency to public safety (p. 8). And then there are union members who – on top of their regular job – volunteer to represent their fellow members at rallies (p. 4), in contract negotiations (p. 5), and on Local 17's Regional Executive Committee (p. 6-7), so that our collective voice can be heard and positive progress can be made.

Government work also has a long history of pushing boundaries – of ensuring that underrepresented people are given employment and advancement opportunities, and that employees are compensated through a system that strives to reduce bias, both explicit and implicit.

Many of us on staff, myself included, have come from the public sector. We were drawn to Local 17 because we value the work you do for the greater good. Yet, we know there is always more to be done to make sure that everyone is being treated equitably, and that policies change with the changing times. I grappled a little bit with choosing a photo of a staff member for this issue's cover because I strive to represent a broad cross-section of our membership there. But I loved Lorelei's look of defiance in the face of anti-union, anti-public employee forces, and I wanted to impress upon you two things: 1) we, too, are Local 17 members! Your successes are our successes, your challenges are our challenges; and 2) we are out there fighting for you everyday because we believe in the work you are doing.

So, thank you for choosing public service. Your work does not go unnoticed – it improves my life and the lives of everyone in our communities everyday.

In unity,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Deidre". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping "D" and a long, horizontal tail stroke.

Local 17 scholarship application now available!



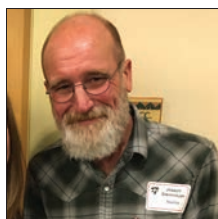
Local 17 is offering two \$3000 scholarships this year to dependents of members – one for students who will be incoming college freshmen in the fall, and one for students who are continuing their education beyond freshmen year.

The application is now available on the Local 17 website (www.ptel7.org/scholarship). In it, applicants are asked to demonstrate their academic achievement, community service, extracurricular activities, and educational goals. They are also asked to write a labor-related essay which is reviewed by outside labor educators. The deadline to apply is July 31, 2018.

If you have any questions about the scholarship program, contact Communications Director Deidre Girard at deidre@ptel7.org or 206-328-7321 ext. 130. ■

Local 17 member nominated for Best Steward at MLK County Labor Council's 'Labor Oscars'

Joe Steinmeyer, Local 17 Steward and a Meter Reader at Seattle City Light, was nominated for Best Shop Steward at the Martin Luther King County Labor Council's inaugural 'Labor Oscars', which took place on Feb. 24.



Steinmeyer has been a Local 17 member since 2007, and has been the face of Local 17 in the workplace ever since. He is also a founding member of the Steward Academy – a member-led initiative to train new Local 17 leaders. Recently, he has been instrumental in making sure that Meter Readers are treated fairly while the City implements a new automated metering system, which will render many of his co-workers' jobs obsolete. Steinmeyer even helped pen an editorial in *Crosscut* (dated March 6) about the situation at City Light.

Thank you to Joe for his many years service to Local 17. While he didn't win the 'Oscar,' he's still a Super Steward to all of us! ■

'Day of Action' brings attention to workers' rights in face of *Janus* case



King County Executive Dow Constantine speaks at the Day of Action in downtown Seattle, with Local 17 Vice President Hossein Barahimi, Local 17 King County Chapter President Jennell Hicks and other union members standing in solidarity. (Photo courtesy King County).

February 26 was a historic day for public sector unions across the country. On that day, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in a case named *Janus v AFSCME*. But also on this day, union members throughout Seattle and around the country held a 'Day of Action' to call attention to all of the good that unions do for working people everyday.

The *Janus* case – backed by anti-union forces – is designed to defund unions, thus reducing their collective power to protect the things that working people value. It is an attack on the working class by corporate powers.

But together, union members and management from across the City of Seattle, King County and the State stood side-by-side and rallied for union values.

At the King County Administration building, County Executive Dow Constantine stood in solidarity with union members, highlighting how important unions are to a vibrant, inclusive community. Labor leaders from the King County Coalition of Unions – which includes PTE 17, Teamsters, SEIU, and ATU – also spoke from the heart about what it means to be a union member.

Local 17's own Jennell Hicks, President of the Local 17 King County Chapter, reminded us that the Labor movement is a social justice movement; that Union power has an important role in strengthening our community's value system and moving our County forward.

"Sometimes we forget and get complacent about the journey where we've come from; so I'm going to ask you today to remember that every right you have started out of a movement," said Hicks at the rally.

"It's up to us to stay together, stay motivated, and stay in solidarity," Hicks continued.

Local 17 members showed up in force with their "I love my Union" stickers. Your Local 17 staff is thankful to have such a passionate, motivated and engaged membership. If you are new to the Union, know that we stand strong and we stand together. If you would like to get more involved in your union, visit www.ptel7.org/get_involved.php. ■

Negotiations begin for 2019-21 state contract; wage increases, adjustments to top list of priorities

The Local 17 state employee bargaining team has assembled a list of initial proposals to kick off the 2019-21 round of negotiations, which will begin April 25.

The team used the hundreds of employee surveys submitted as well as experiences in their respective offices to create work-rule proposals to present to management. Economic discussions will take place in subsequent bargaining sessions as we get closer to when the State will release its revenue forecast, which drives what the State can spend in the next biennium.

The contract – which covers employees with the Department of Licensing (DOL), the Department of Transportation (WSDOT), and the Washington State Patrol (WSP) – includes all working conditions and compensation issues affecting Local 17 members, except those excluded by law like the state's pension and healthcare benefits. The law does, however, allow unions to negotiate in coalition the cost-share rate of the medical premium, which is currently 85 percent employer-paid and 15 percent employee-paid.

The bargaining team was selected at the February policy meeting, which was open for all state members to attend.

On the bargaining team this year for WSDOT are Faith Shuler, Daniel Jones, and Steve Morgans from the Engineering series, and Elsa Pond and Eliza McGovern from the Planning series. Representing DOL will be Donna Blume, a Pro-rate and Fuel Tax Auditor, and Licensing Service Representative Heather Hoffmann. For the WSP, Communication Officer Mindi Mezek and Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Officer Russ Hallgren will represent their fellow members. Local 17 staffers Alexis Young and Sarah Lorenzini will also be part of the team.

While the economy is on the upswing and revenue projections look good, the team will still face obstacles due to the rigid set of criteria that needs to be met to justify any market wage adjustment. In general, a demonstrated recruitment and/or retention issue must exist regardless of how much the classification lags behind market rates. This has unfortunately resulted in the alienation of groups of loyal employees who stuck with the state despite not seeing substantive increases for almost a decade.

Wage increases continue to be the top priority in this contract. But other items on the priority list include: implementing tools for succession planning, getting more training for union Stewards, and having better access to new employees to help them understand the importance of being a union member.

Pursuant to state law, contract negotiations need to be completed and agreements ratified by October 1, 2018. After the Governor's Office of Financial Management reviews the contracts in the fall to determine whether they're financially feasible, the 2019 legislature must include the state employee contracts in their budget before they can be implemented on July 1, 2019.

While the current balance in Olympia leans more toward lawmakers who support state employees, that could change before the start of the next session. Please remember to vote this fall, and make sure to vote for candidates who support fair pay for state employees.

State members should also make sure the Local 17 office has a current personal email address on file for the latest bargaining news and updates. You can update your address online at: pte17.org/address/form.html. ■

Why did you join the negotiations team?



"As someone who has worked in both Olympic and North Central regions as well as HQ, I feel like I bring a different perspective to the bargaining team. I also started as a Tech 1 and have worked my way to an E3. I look forward to learning the process and doing what I can to help us have a successful negotiation."

Faith Shuler, Local 17 member and Transportation Engineer, WSDOT

Update your contact information with us at: pte17.org/address/form.html

Regional Executive Committee (REC) passes budget, gets trained, mobilized to engage new members

On March 10, the Regional Executive Committee (REC) – the governing body of your union – met at the Hotel Murano in Tacoma with nearly 100 members, staff and guests in attendance.

Local 17 Vice President Hossein Barahimi (King County) and newly elected Trustee Mary Davis (City of Seattle) were sworn-in by Secretary-Treasurer Sean Simmons to their roles on the Executive Board. Newly elected delegates from Washington and Oregon were also sworn in. The minutes from the last meeting were approved, and President Lois Watt welcomed delegates to the meeting.

The theme of the March REC meeting was 'Bring. It. On.' and showcased the new initiatives that Local 17 is working on in the face of the *Janus v. AFSCME* court case, which threatens to weaken public



Local 17 President Lois Watt (left) stands by while Secretary-Treasurer Sean Simmons swears in new Trustee Mary Davis and continuing Vice President Hossein Barahimi, who were elected to the Board in the fall.



As part of a workshop on Right-to-Work at the REC, two guest speakers – Brian Jones (top) from IBEW77 and Local 17's own James Spalding (above) – talk about their experiences working in states that make it difficult, if not impossible, for workers to unionize.

sector unions. These initiatives include: educating members about what it means to live in a Right-to-Work environment, training member leaders to help welcome new employees to the union, and building loyalty among our current members.

Investigatory Panel Formed

Early in the meeting, there was a motion from the floor to create a panel of REC delegates who would be tasked with continuing the investigation into Local 17 Executive Director Behnaz Nelson, who has been on paid administrative leave since Jan. 7. After vigorous discussion, it was decided that a nine member panel would be formed of REC delegates proportionally representing the membership. This panel will bring a recommendation to the entire REC for final decision-making. Members will continue to be updated about the status of the investigation as it progresses.

Interim Co-Executive Directors' Report

Since January, Union Representatives Amy Bowles and Denise Cobden have been serving as Local 17's Co-Executive

Directors. They were appointed by the Executive Board to serve in the interim during the investigation.

In their remarks to the REC, both Bowles and Cobden talked about union values, and their passion for the Labor movement. They both stated that Local 17 is poised to demonstrate and communicate the many benefits of being in a union to both current members and new hires, who will likely have the decision to opt-out of paying union dues after the *Janus* case is decided. Under their direction, the staff is working hard to mobilize members and to build engagement.

Budget

Local 17 Secretary-Treasurer Sean Simmons reviewed the 2017 budget and the proposed 2018 budget for the delegation. Bowles and Cobden helped answer questions pertaining to this year's spending proposals. After an amendment by the delegation to add money to the budget for an additional REC meeting, the budget was approved.

Workshops: Working in a Right-to-Work state; building Union loyalty

REC delegates had the opportunity to learn what it's like to work in a Right-to-Work state from two guest speakers – Brian Jones from IBEW77 and James Spalding, a PTE17 member.

Jones talked about the low wages and unsafe working conditions as an electrician in Kansas and Alabama, which prompted his move to Washington state five years ago. Spalding – who works for the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) – shared his own experience working a non-union engineering job in Oklahoma, as well as his wife's experience working for Boeing in the south. Local 17 members were shocked to hear the dramatic differences in pay, benefits, and working conditions without a union.

In the afternoon, delegates heard about Local 17's new employee initiative, and learned how to talk about why the union is important to them. This is just one component of the new program, which aims to have six positive union interactions with new hires within their first 90 days on the job. Member delegates were eager to help and walked away from the meeting enthusiastically armed with welcome packets for the new hires in their offices. Other member leaders who would like to be a part of this initiative can reach out to their Union Representative or Development Director Chelsea Nelson (chelsea@pte17.org) to get involved.

Community Building

Another new piece to the REC meeting was engaging members in big picture issues that can improve all workplaces and our communities.

Shaun Van Eyk, Union Representative for the City of Seattle, shared a heart-breaking story about one of his members who lost her child just days after birth. Even though the city recently enacted a paid parental leave policy that allowed time off to bond with a new child, it did



Local 17 REC delegates, Co-Interim Executive Directors Denise Cobden (front left) and Amy Bowles (front right), and Local 17 staff socialize after the meeting.

not include language that would allow a parent to take time off to recover after the sudden death of a child.

REC delegates felt that this was an issue that could mobilize members to create policy changes in all jurisdictions, and expressed interest in finding other topics that every member could rally around.

Celebrating Members

During lunch, Local 17 members from across Washington and Oregon who had served on negotiating teams in the last year were honored for their service with a box of Almond Roca – a local candy made in Tacoma.

Also, long-time member and REC delegate Jana Augenstine was honored with a Local 17 Gold Card. While she was unable to attend the REC, members gave her a hardy round of applause for her many years of dedicated service.



REC delegate José Romo (King County) with his wife and daughter at the post-REC event.

Augenstine retired in January 2018 after 30 years with WSDOT.

Local 17 also held its first (in many years) post-REC, no-host social event for members at the family-friendly 7 Seas Brewery in Tacoma. Over 20 members attended. ■

Find ways to get involved in your union at: pte17.org/get_involved.php

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Specialists use maps, data to improve services throughout Skagit County

From its beginnings as solely a computerized mapping tool in the late 1980's, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is now used in countless ways to collect, manage and analyze data for both businesses and government alike. At Skagit County – an early adopter of the tool – Local 17 GIS specialists work to streamline information and create accurate, useful data and reports for nearly every department in the County.

With just three people in the office in the 1990's, the GIS department was originally tasked with mapping property lines for use in tax assessment. While this is still one aspect of their work, the department now has ten full-time employees – nine Local 17 members and one supervisor – who provide data for public works, parks, 911, public health, police, fire, ferries, county court, elections and more.

Kari Randall-Secrest, who has been in the GIS office since 1995, has seen the tremendous growth and appreciation for this kind of specified and targeted data. "We can use GIS to solve all kinds of problems," she said. "Everyday is different – I never get bored."

Because the software and equipment associated with GIS can be very costly, it has proven both economical and convenient to have one central GIS office with experts on hand to work on detailed and complex projects.

The public safety applications of GIS are particularly vital to County residents. Local 17 member Beverly Lothamer is working on an extensive update to location information throughout the County that police and fire departments, as well as the state's 911 call centers, can use to better pinpoint trouble spots when they arise.

"We're providing the best service to County residents by finding efficiencies and solutions that make their lives better," said Josh Greenberg who has spent 18 years in the department.

Greenberg is responsible for coordinating updated aerial photos of the entire County, and is working on an interactive tool that combines historical and geological data for public use. He is also interested in how government can ethically and cost-effectively use drones for mapping and other applications in the future.

Because the technology is constantly changing, the GIS Specialists need to keep their skills sharp.

"One of my favorite things about this job is that we're constantly learning," said Local 17 member Sean Carson. "Our brains are always being challenged as new developments happen with the software and the types of data we can collect."

Western Washington University (WWU) in Bellingham has an excellent GIS program and many of these Local 17 members have their undergraduate or advanced degrees from there.

After working briefly as a Civil Engineer in Burlington, Rachel Vaughn – the newest GIS team member – came on board in November. She graduated from WWU with an Environmental Science major and GIS minor in 2017.

Both Vaughn and fellow member and WWU alum David Parnicky are working to update parcel and property line information. Their jobs are challenging because they need to work on incredibly detailed segments of the computerized map little by little.

As the second newest employee, Parnicky has been with the County for 10 years. The commitment of members to their jobs is in part attributed to the collegial atmosphere created by their boss Geoff Almvig.

"This department has such a welcoming culture," said Vaughn. "It's so nice to work with good people who really love their jobs." ■



The GIS department at Skagit County (left to right): Geoff Almvig (supervisor), David Parnicky, Sean Carson, Rachel Vaughn, Kari Randall-Secrest, Janice Baird, Beverly Lothamer, and Josh Greenberg (not pictured Kim Berry).

City of Seattle pilots public charging stations for electric vehicles, with Local 17 members at the helm

As part of the 'Drive Clean' initiative, the City of Seattle is investing in many different programs to help us reduce our collective carbon footprint. One of these projects includes the installation of 20 public, quick-charging stations for electric cars throughout the city. The first station opened on Beacon Hill in January 2018.

For the last year, three Local 17 members at Seattle City Light have been instrumental in getting this project off the ground: Seema Ghosh, John Owen and Jake Wade.

Ghosh, an Electrical Power Systems Engineer, started working at City Light a year and a half ago just about at the start of this pilot project. Coming to the City from consulting work in the private sector, she loves being part of a project from beginning to end, creatively thinking about all of the details that make up the whole.

Many factors go into choosing a site. In addition to cost-effectiveness, the team is looking to disperse the sights equitably across the city in visible and accessible locations.

The Beacon Hill charging station – off of Beacon Ave. South near El Centro de la Raza – was chosen for a variety of reasons including: the fact that the City has right-of-way use and power capabilities on this property; its close proximity to transit and amenities that make it appealing for people to do other things while their car is recharging; and it meets the City's race and social justice goals to better serve historically underserved communities.

While the data is just starting to trickle in from the Beacon Hill charging station, the team has already seen enthusiasm for the program first-hand.

"There was a man waiting to charge his vehicle the second we hooked it up on that first morning," said Wade, Renewable Energy Program Manager.

With the DC Fast Charger equipment, it takes about 20 minutes to fully charge the battery of a Nissan Leaf, for example. In comparison, an electric vehicle owner



Local 17 members Jake Wade, Seema Ghosh and John Owen work on different aspects of the City of Seattle's electric vehicle charging station program.

would need to plug their car in overnight using a regular residential outlet to fully charge the vehicle. It will cost customers about \$10 to power-up at the station.

The team is working on finding optimal locations for a total of 20 DC Fast Chargers – distributed among 10 to 15 sites – by the end of 2018. The City has allocated about \$2.2 million for this project.

With 60 percent of the City's carbon emissions coming from transportation, another goal of the 'Drive Clean' initiative is to expand electric vehicle usage to 30 percent of total vehicles on the road by 2030. The City is also exploring how they can update their own fleet of cars and trucks with cleaner technologies, and partner with other municipalities like King County Metro and Washington State Ferries to help solve the pollution problem.

"We're going to be a completely different city in 20 years," said Wade. "The projects we're working on today ask: 'what kind of city do we want to be?'"

Conservation has been a priority for City Light since the 1970s. Today, with 90 percent of Seattle's energy coming from renewable sources – like hydroelectricity – City Light is already considered the

greenest utility in the country. But by fostering innovative projects like the electric charging stations, Seattle is paving the way as a model for other cities to do what they can to reduce carbon emissions and protect our environment.

"As city employees, I feel like we have a positive impact on the community and the environment," said Owen, who supervises the Emerging Technologies group at City Light. "Our work is directed at providing public benefit rather than a blind focus on maximizing profit." ■

"We're going to be a completely different city in 20 years. The projects we're working on today ask: 'what kind of city do we want to be?'"

Jake Wade, Local 17 member and Renewable Energy Program Manager, City of Seattle

Life After Work: King County member publishes memoir chronicling her life on the open ocean

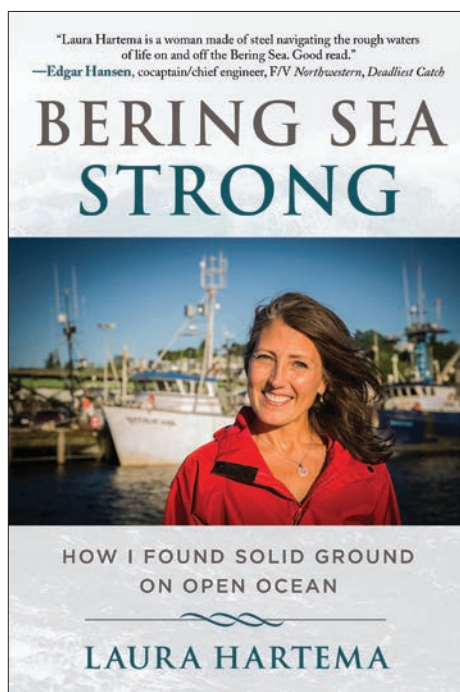
Local 17 member Laura Hartema has always had a passion for the environment as evidenced by her 20-plus year career as an Ecologist with King County.

In the Water and Land Resource Division, Hartema and her colleagues spend their days designing, constructing, and monitoring wetland and stream restoration projects throughout King County. In this region, where development and growth can have dramatic impacts on the environment, their important work helps to preserve native species and improve habitats and greenspaces.

"I love the dedication and passion my coworkers have for our awesome work and knowing that with each project we are improving and protecting habitat for fish, wildlife and our King County community," said Hartema about her job.

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*Laura Hartema, Local 17 Member,
King County Ecologist, and
author of 'Bering Sea Strong'*



Local 17 member Laura Hartema's memoir is about her experience on aboard a commercial fishing vessel in the Bering Sea.

But before she started working at the County in 1996, Hartema had many adventures and challenges as the only woman and scientist working on fishing vessels on the high seas of Alaska, which she has now chronicled in her new book called '*Bering Sea Strong: How I Found Solid Ground on Open Ocean.*'

While reminiscing about her time at sea, Hartema realized that period of her life really impacted her and might be interesting and entertaining to others. She dedicated the last four years to her book, though she has worked on it in spurts for over a decade. With perseverance, it was picked up by a publisher and just released in March 2018.

Hartema's book describes what it was like to spend three months at sea as a fisheries observer alongside 25 commercial

fishermen. The story has both drama and danger, and ultimately demonstrates her incredible strength in the face of difficult circumstances and unknown challenges.

When asked what she hoped readers would take away from her book, Hartema said: "I hope folks will read it, examine their own lives, and see how the hardships help shape us."

"It's about realizing we are all flawed, but with grace (and some humor) we can forgive others who are going down their own difficult paths. It's about letting go and pushing beyond our circumstances to find our own strength and the best life we can lead."

Hartema never set out to write a book, but she's been an avid diary and journal writer for as long as she can remember.

"Writing makes me see the details of each day more vividly — in both the beauty and the sadness," she said.

So far, the book has received many positive reviews from readers on Amazon, Goodreads, etc... Hartema is grateful that people are enjoying her story and taking away something positive from her experience.

Hartema says her secret to a happy life is having a positive attitude, a sense of humor, and being grateful for what she has. She asks people to think about how they want to live, and to remember that while we can't always choose our life circumstances, we can choose how we react to them.

"Life is quite lovely, despite the challenges and setbacks," she said. "I focus on the good and the beauty in life — it's there if you look for it."

For more information on Hartema and her new book, you can visit: www.laurahartema.com ■

*Have a story you'd like to share about your work or what you do outside of work?
Contact Communications Director Deidre Girard at deidre@ptel17.org*

2018 short session wraps-up in Olympia with some wins for workers: equal pay, employee right to unionize, more

Washington state lawmakers completed their legislative work for 2018 on March 8, without holding a special session for the first time since 2014. Though not challenged with setting the biennial budget this year, there were many issues that could have prolonged that streak. Reflective of issues attracting national concern, the state attempted to deal with voting rights, bump stocks, sexual harassment and taxes.

Property taxes became a major issue in the supplemental budget debate. Budget talks included additional mandates by the state supreme court to fund education and teachers' salaries, pumping almost another \$1 billion into the system.

A major budget addition came for mental health (\$300 million) and other public health services that are often delivered by Local 17 public employees, including \$3 million for Seattle & King County disease prevention. The Public Health Roundtable -- a coalition of local and state health jurisdictions and affiliated organizations, including Local 17 -- is currently working on a larger funding package for the next biennium.

With Democratic majorities in both the House and Senate now, there were a number of bills on various issues that aid workers and their families, including: the use of shared leave for pregnancy/parental bonding (HB 1434); equal pay (HB1506);

part-time employee protections (HB 2669); and employee rights (SB2669, HB 2751 and SB 6231).

Local 17 and the coalition of public sector unions continue to push for protecting the rights of employees and their private information.

Unfortunately, a bill to bar employee birthdates from public disclosure (SB 6079) died in the Senate due to the influence of news media and the anti-union lobby. But the union coalition will continue to push the issue by targeting election efforts in November to support legislators who understand the protections necessary for public employees. ■

To learn more about the political issues that impact Local 17 members, visit: pte17.org/publicaffairs

Oregon: 2018 legislative session; spring primary endorsements

The Oregon 2018 legislative session wrapped up in early March. While there were few labor-related issues debated, two bills are worth noting.

HB 4005 is a continuation of the debate around prescription drug costs and transparency. During the 2017 session, many organizations, including Local 17, worked on several pieces of legislation that attempted to influence the rapid cost increases of prescription drugs, which are accounting for an ever-increasing share of many of our health benefit dollars. After facing intense resistance from drug manufacturers in 2017, HB 4005 was crafted as a narrowly-focused transparency requirement, requiring drug companies to disclose certain information if prices of individual drugs increase beyond annual thresholds. The bill was passed with bipartisan support and was signed by the Governor in early March.

Due to a change in PERS Board investment strategies, IAP accounts will transition in 2019 to an age-based portfolio based on each members' target

retirement date. However, because this target date will be set based on a number of assumptions, HB 4159 was drafted to allow individual members input on whether to opt out of this age-based investment profile. The bill is awaiting the Governor's signature when this was written, and Local 17 will monitor rulemaking regarding this bill and the details that will be determined in that process.

May 2018 Portland City Council Primary Endorsements

In late February, Local 17's Portland Chapter elections committee held interviews with seven candidates running for Portland City Council.

For Position 3, the elections committee has chosen to endorse Nick Fish for reelection. The committee was impressed by his pro-labor positions on many issues. Importantly, he has a strong track record of engaging with labor and proficient management of the Water Bureau and the Bureau of Environmental Services. His leadership during the 2014 water district

ballot measure and establishment of the Public Utility Board remains an important accomplishment for maintaining City services. While his challenger Julia DeGraw made a positive impression during her interview, the committee believes that Commissioner Fish has been an ally to labor during his time on council, and that his reelection will be positive for Local 17 members.

For Position 2 (currently held by retiring Commissioner Dan Saltzman), at the time of this publication the elections committee has not made a recommendation. After interviewing five candidates for the position, the committee has decided that the field is still too uncertain to make an endorsement decision. The committee is closely tracking the campaign as it unfolds, and may choose to make an endorsement if circumstances favor such an action. If no endorsement is made in advance of the May primary and two candidates move on to a November election, the committee will restart the process to make an endorsement for the fall. ■



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Labor Victories

WA legislature passes big protections for workers in 2018 session

In light of the attack on public sector unions via the *Janus v. AFSCME* case, unions and their supporters turned to the state legislature in an effort to pass protections for unionized public employees.

During the 2018 session – with a more labor-friendly majority – the Washington State Legislature enacted two bills that will mitigate the impact that the *Janus* case will have on Labor: Senate Bill 6229 and House Bill 2751.

Specifically, HB 2751 will allow union dues to continue to be automatically deducted from represented employees paychecks. For members who no longer desire to pay union dues, this bill will simply require those individuals to submit a request to withdraw in writing to their union.

Additionally under HB 2751, new employees joining a position in a represented bargaining unit will be considered dues-paying members until they

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affirmatively opt-out of the union via a written request.

SB 6229 will allow union representatives an opportunity to meet and speak with new employees for a minimum of 30-minutes on paid worker's time. This legislation will no longer al-

low government employers to prevent or obstruct newly represented members from speaking with their union while at their place of employment. While some employers already grant this kind of time to unions, many do not, so this is a big win across-the-board.

The *Janus* case will be decided by the end of June, if not earlier, and any change in the law will take effect immediately. Both of these bills will bolster major protections for public sector unions in Washington state as Right-to-Work inevitably looms on the horizon. ■