

# insight

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS

Jan/Feb  
2019  
Vol 24  
No. 1



OF PROTEC17 (Formerly PTE Local 17)



**Seattle Silence Breakers demand  
big changes to stop harassment and  
discrimination in the workplace**



### On the Cover:

PROTEC17 members at the City of Seattle have been pivotal in the formation of Seattle Silence Breakers – a group of employees that are working to shed light on discrimination and harassment in the workplace, and to come up with solutions to change the culture. Read more on pages 6-7. ■

### News and Features



Benton-Franklin ratifies 2019-20 contract .....	4
Learn about our new Professional Development Fund .....	5
Seattle Filipino group supports culture and community .....	8
Life After Work: Engineering and Rollerderby .....	9
Labor Victories: King County reclassification win .....	12



### Government Affairs

2019 OR legislative session in full swing .....	10
WA legislature most diverse in history .....	11

### Professional and Technical Employees Local 17

2900 Eastlake Avenue East, Ste. 300  
Seattle, Washington 98102  
Phone.....206-328-7321  
Toll-Free.....800-783-001  
Fax.....206-328-7402  
Email.....union@protec17.org  
Website.....www.protec17.org

**President:** Hossein Barahimi

**Vice-President:** Sean Simmons

**Secretary-Treasurer:** Cindy Watanabe-Mezs

**Trustee:** Mary Davis

**Trustee:** Jessica Garcia

**Trustee:** Sarah Spotts

### Acting Executive Director:

Anthony Davidson  
Ext. 121 • anthony@protec17.org

**Finance Director:** Jackie Miller

Ext. 102 • miller@protec17.org

**Operations Director:** Anthony Davidson

Ext. 121 • anthony@protec17.org

### Union Representatives

Denise Cobden  
Ext. 127 • denise@protec17.org  
Annie Costello  
Ext. 120 • annie@protec17.org  
Sarah Lorenzini  
Ext. 110 • sarah@protec17.org  
Steven Pray  
Ext. 105 • steven@protec17.org  
Ray Sugarman  
Ext. 107 • ray@protec17.org  
Shaun Van Eyk  
Ext. 133 • shaun@protec17.org  
Brent Wagar  
Ext. 131 • lorelei@protec17.org  
Lorelei Walker  
Ext. 122 • lorelei@protec17.org  
Rachel Whiteside  
Ext. 113 • rachel@protec17.org  
Alexis Young  
Ext. 103 • alexis@protec17.org

### Union Organizers

Alisha Gregory-Davis  
Ext. 116 • alisha@protec17.org  
Melissa Mafua  
Ext. 129 • melissa@protec17.org

### Program Directors

**Communications:** Deidre Girard  
Ext. 130 • deidre@protec17.org  
**Research:** Elliot Levin  
Ext. 128 • elliot@protec17.org  
**Strategic Initiatives:** Vince Oliveri  
Ext. 108 • vince@protec17.org

### Office Staff

**Communications Specialist:** Donna Clarke  
Ext. 104 • donna@protec17.org  
**Membership Administrator:** Laura Elia  
Ext. 123 • laura@protec17.org

## insight

Anthony Davidson, Interim Managing Editor; Deidre Girard, Editor Insight (ISSN 1093-1694) is the official publication of Professional and Technical Employees Local 17 (PROTEC17). Insight is published bi-monthly by PROTEC17, 2900 Eastlake Avenue East, Suite 300, Seattle, WA 98102. Periodicals postage paid at Seattle, Washington. Postmaster: Send address change to: Insight - 2900 Eastlake Ave. E., Ste. 300, Seattle, WA 98102-3012. www.protec17.org



Deidre Girard  
Communications Director,  
*Insight* Editor

# Making change happen

**T**his organization and its members are always busy making things happen. From pushing for better contracts and policies, to supporting the community at work and beyond, our members truly have the will and the skills to make positive change.

Last year, an important group emerged at the City of Seattle – the Seattle Silence Breakers. The group, spearheaded by several PROTEC17 members, is challenging leaders to have the necessary and important conversations about discrimination and harassment in the workplace (p.6-7). Their solidarity and strength have helped get these issues the attention they deserve, and have inspired many to help change the culture.

It has also been inspirational to see the changes in Washington D.C. and the Washington state legislature brought about by everyday people exercising their right to vote. After the November election, the most diverse group of Senators and Representatives in history was welcomed to Olympia this January (p. 11), as well as to our nation's capitol. This diversity better represents the rich tapestry of our country, and highlights the voices of many who have not been heard for a long time.

A lot of big things are happening at your union, too. In early January, we launched our new website (protec17.org) and shortly after that, we unveiled our new Professional Development Fund, which is designed to support your professional goals by funding job-related, educational opportunities (p .5). There has been tremendous positive response to both. In 2019, we'll be working on additional programs and benefits for you, like discounts and a members-only mobile app, because we know that we need to keep continuing to improve upon ourselves.

Sometimes it can feel like there is so much work to do, and the task at hand seems daunting. But making changes, one at a time, little-by-little, day-by-day, eventually will result in big movement. Thank you for all that you do – big and small – to change our world.

In unity,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deidre".

## PROTEC17 welcomes new Tacoma-based Union Rep



In January, Brent Wagar joined the staff at PROTEC17 as a Union Representative to serve members at the City of Tacoma, Pierce County and the Kitsap Public Health District.

For 23 years, Wagar worked at the Bellevue School District as a custodian. He became extremely active in his union as a Steward, and was offered a job with the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 286 where he worked as a Union Representative and Communications Director for the last several years.

"I wasn't looking for a new job but this opportunity to come work with PROTEC17 was something I just couldn't pass up," he said. "I couldn't be more excited."

Wagar also sits on the executive board of the Pierce County Central Labor Council.

"I have learned so much in this role and met so many great people dedicated to protecting and expanding the rights of workers. I know these connections will pay dividends in this role representing so many folks at the city and county."

Wagar was born in Seattle and grew up in Juanita. He graduated with a BA from The Evergreen State College with a focus on political science and history. He has lived in Tacoma since 2000 with his wife and two children.

Tacoma, Pierce and Kitsap members can reach him at [brent@protec17.org](mailto:brent@protec17.org) or 800-783-0017, ext. 131. ■

## Benton-Franklin Health ratifies contract; leadership team sets 2019 goals

In January, PROTEC17 member-leaders at the Benton Franklin Health District (BFHD) gathered to share ideas and make plans for 2019.

The BFHD leadership team recently went through some transformation and have implemented a less formal and more egalitarian method of Chapter governance. Instead of President, Vice President, etc., they are pioneering a new approach with a team of leaders who equally help make and implement chapter decisions.

The BFHD leaders talked about improving their communication with members, including giving advance notice of meetings and trainings, and increasing the amount of communications to members, in order to increase member participation.

"As union leaders, we must connect with all of our members," said Jessica Garcia, BFHD social worker, Chapter leader, and PROTEC17 Executive Board member.

The leaders also debriefed the recent contract negotiations. Everyone was

pleased with the gain of a three-percent cost of living adjustment (COLA) for each year of the two-year contract for 2019-20.

For their next negotiations, the team decided that their meetings with management need to start a month or two earlier in September and October.

The leadership team at Benton-Franklin Health District is: Jessica Davis, Jessica Garcia, Bethany Hickey, Vanessa McCollum, JoDee Payton, Lars Richins, Melissa Roberts, and Britt Wilkins.

A big thank you to the leadership team for all of their hard work to get a strong contract, and for their dedication to getting all BFHD members involved in their union!

If you have questions or thoughts for your leadership team, feel free to reach out to them or to your Union Representative Annie Costello at 800-783-0017, ext. 120 or [annie@protec17.org](mailto:annie@protec17.org). ■



The leadership team at Benton-Franklin Health District (back row): Jessica Garcia, Vanessa McCollum, Lars Richins, Britt Wilkins, and Bethany Hickey (front row): Jessica Davis, Melissa Roberts and JoDee Payton.



## Supporting members' professional goals: Introducing the new PROTEC17 Professional Development Fund

**I**n addition to the everyday benefits of union membership (a strong contract, for instance!), PROTEC17 is working on expanding our member benefits program this year, including adding a new professional development fund (PDF).

Over the years, we've heard about our members' interest in training opportunities to help them in their jobs or to advance their careers, so last year the PROTEC17 Executive Board approved development of this fund and has allocated \$10,000 to it for 2019.

The PDF operates on a first-come, first-served basis and as a reimbursement program. Members can request up to \$200 per year for job-related coursework, training, conferences or seminars for which they paid out of pocket. Only direct educational expenses can be considered – the fund cannot be used for travel-related expenses.

To apply, members must submit the PDF application, which asks how the activity supports your professional goals, our new membership application (to update our records), confirmation of your registration for the educational activity, and an invoice or itemized receipt showing your payment. Applications are now available at [protec17.org/benefits](http://protec17.org/benefits).

Within a week of being announced, 20 members had already applied for funds.

Steven Farnell, an Information Technology professional at King County was the very first to apply. He was excited to take advantage of this new benefit:

"It took me years to pay off my student debt after college, and it convinced me that I don't want to accumulate debt for an education. The idea that the Union could help fund education and advanced training for me is a great benefit."

Given the nature of his work and the speed at which technology changes,



The new PROTEC17 Professional Development Fund launched in January, providing reimbursement for job-related coursework, trainings and conferences for members..

Farnell knows he needs to stay on top of his skills. Coursework and trainings are a great way to do that.

Some of your union contracts (Portland and King County, for example) may contain articles that designate funds for job-related learning, too. Ask your Union Representative if there is such a provision in your contract. You may apply to use both funds if, for example, you find two separate training activities, or an activity costs more than the fund's limit.

Stay tuned for more information on additional benefit programs, like our annual scholarship program for dependents of members, and a discount program (in development!) on things like insurance and amusement park tickets.

We are very proud to support our members' professional goals in this new way. If you have additional questions about the PDF, please contact Communications Director Deidre Girard at 800-783-0017, ext. 130 or [deidre@protec17.org](mailto:deidre@protec17.org). ■

**"It took me years to pay off my student debt after college, and it convinced me that I don't want to accumulate debt for an education. The idea that the Union could help fund education and advanced training for me is a great benefit."**

Steven Farnell,  
PROTEC17 Member and IT Professional,  
King County

**Learn more about our member benefits: [www.protec17.org/benefits](http://www.protec17.org/benefits)**

## Seattle Silence Breakers are using their collective voice to change the culture of harassment and discrimination

**T**he national attention garnered by the #MeToo movement starting in 2017 has sparked something of a revolution.

Since then, women and allies across the country are bringing much-deserved awareness to the undercurrent of sexism, harassment, and discrimination in our culture as a whole. And in Seattle, there is a group that is turning that awareness into action to bring change to their workplace.

The Seattle Silence Breakers (SSB) formed in November 2017 after an article that was published in *The Stranger* exposed a long-standing pattern of sexual harassment being pushed under the rug at Seattle City Light.

In the comments section, someone posted a link to an event sponsored by the activist organization Radical Women called “The Power of #MeToo.”



Seattle Silence Breakers Tia Jones (PROTEC17), Phany Chey, Markisha Dixon (PROTEC17), and Gina Petry after attending a meeting with Mayor Durkan at Seattle City Hall.

**“The Silence Breakers and other employee groups are doing good work. That is what it is going to take, along with public support.”**

Kathleen Merrigan  
Retired Cable Splicer  
Seattle City Light



Seattle Silence Breakers are led by PROTEC17 member and City Light employee Denise Krownbell (right) and Radical Women organizer Gina Petry (left).

Several current and former City Light employees decided to go, including Megan Cornish, Denise Krownbell, Kathleen Merrigan and Beth Rocha. At the meeting, Rocha revealed herself as one of the anonymous women in the *Stranger* article.

“When Beth told her story, I was ticked-embarrassed-disgusted-sad, all at the same time, that the place where I work could treat anyone this way,” said PROTEC17 member Denise Krownbell.

After sharing their stories with each other, these women noticed the similarities in the way they were treated when they brought discrimination and harassment issues to management and human resources – and they decided to do something about it.

“It was that night we decided to form the group that became Seattle Silence Breakers,” said Krownbell.

They spread the word, and got more than 30 people to attend their first meeting, representing departments throughout the City, including Construction and Inspection, Information Technology, Public Utilities, and Transportation.

Since that initial meeting, the SSB have mobilized, staging actions and

events, and making headway with City leaders to demand change.

The goal of the group – now led by Krownbell and Radical Women’s Gina Petry – is to be a voice for employees who are experiencing any type of harassment and discrimination, but who aren’t ready to completely break their silence and risk their livelihoods. The SSB also want to ensure that the City makes it a priority to end policies that reinforce this culture of fear and retaliation.

“For me, seeing and hearing the impact that discrimination, harassment, and bullying have on employees makes me speak out and take action,” said Krownbell on why she decided to take a leadership role in the SSB.

“It was why I wanted to become a union steward, too. No one should be treated this way – not in “liberal” Seattle or anywhere; not on the public’s dime and not in their name. No one should dread – let alone fear – coming to work because of what they will be subjected to. They shouldn’t get physically ill, and they shouldn’t doubt themselves or think they are crazy. That is why I speak up.”

Because of their bold courage, the SSB have gained the respect and support of several City Council members, including Teresa Mosqueda, Kshama Sawant, and Lisa Herbold. Mayor Jenny Durkan and the new City Light CEO Debra Smith are also listening to the SSB, and some progress has been made.

Over the last year, the City has implemented improved policies for sexual harassment settlements and formed an anti-harassment team, as well as developed an Ombudsman program – an independent resource and advocate for employees – a direct result of an SSB proposal.

“The work we have accomplished has come through inclusion, and that inclusion has been prompted by our very visible advocacy: whether it be showing up on the steps of City Hall with signs and a megaphone or with pages of signed petitions to deliver to Mayor Durkan,” said Rocha.





**“I joined Seattle Silence Breakers because of who they are and what they stand for. They are fearless. They are not afraid to speak out and do the right thing. They are united in one voice and they act quickly to face discrimination and harassment, especially against women. They give hope to those that have suffered and they are determined to see that the City is held accountable for making changes.”**

*Gina Kim, PROTEC17 member at Seattle Public Utilities*

Photo above: In one of their actions, SSB members collect stories of harassment from City employees and urge the Mayor to make changes.

Currently, the SSB are working on several different issues. They are forging new relationships with the head of Seattle Public Utilities to discuss issues specific to that department; they are urging the Mayor to create an independent office that pursues discrimination and harassment complaints; and they also have an active petition on Change.org to recind a City Light investigation report that they perceive as biased.

For Kathleen Merrigan, a retired City Light cable splicer who attended that first Radical Women event, the SSB are tackling issues that are very personal to her. As one of the few female workers on the line crew at City Light when she started in the 1980s, she endured many years of mistreatment.

“I am appalled and outraged that city workers are still dealing with these issues,” said Merrigan.

“The Seattle Silence Breakers and other employee groups are doing good work,” said continued. “That is what it is going to take, along with public support.”

PROTEC17 has been supporting the important work of the Silence Breakers, too. Amy Bowles, former PROTEC17 Union

Representative for members at the City, served on the Mayor’s anti-harassment team, and has been a vocal advocate at City Council and in the news media.

“Amy was side by side with us at Council Committee meetings, vocally supportive of our efforts and rightfully critical about the City Light’s lack of involvement with the union on issues regarding workplace expectations, as well as employee-voiced concerns about relevant employee and management training and consistent responses to discrimination and harassment,” said Rocha.

The SSB would like to see PROTEC17 continue to develop relationships with City Council, and to push for a seat at committee meetings where important policy decisions are being made. They also would like their story to be spread far and wide so that their fellow union members and workers in other jurisdictions who may be experiencing these same issues will have hope.

For many at the City of Seattle and beyond, the work of the SSB has been inspiring.

“I truly appreciate the SSB’s fearless willingness to stand and speak up for

those of us employees who have been or still are, victims of harassment in the many forms it is presented, and being bullied in our careers while working for the City of Seattle,” said anonymous.

PROTEC17 member Gina Kim, who works for Seattle Public Utilities joined the SSB “because of who they are and what they stand for”.

“They are fearless,” she continued. “They are not afraid to speak out and do the right thing. They are united in one voice and they act quickly to face discrimination and harassment, especially against women. They give hope to those that have suffered and they are determined to see that the City is held accountable for making changes.”

Though there is still a long way to go, the members of the SSB have blazed a trail for change by taking a stand and using their collective voice. If you feel you are experiencing discrimination or harassment in the workplace, please reach out to your Union Representative. ■

## PROTEC17 members in Filipino American affinity group at City of Seattle celebrate culture and support community



Members of FACES (left to right): Arabella Corcoro, Marie Rompon, Rose Almachar Alves, Jonathan Batara, Andrew Ygon, Cindy Reside Hensel, Nelson Pesigan and Nathan Navarro.

**T**he Filipino American Civil Employees of Seattle (FACES) is about to celebrate 30 years of giving a voice to Filipino and Filipino-American workers at the City of Seattle, as well as lending a helping hand to the broader community.

Founded in 1990, FACES is an open, inclusive group – one of several cultural affinity groups at the City – that aims to create community and support for its members.

Though she's worked for the City for more than 10 years, PROTEC17 member Marie Rompon, who works for the Department of Education and Early Learning, only recently joined FACES.

"I wanted to have a place to share my knowledge and history of our culture, especially through a race and social justice lens, and to help the culture continue to blossom," she said.

City Light employee Nathan Navarro, who is Native American, not Filipino, was invited to join FACES after having lunch with a fellow co-worker who was involved.

"I grew up in Texas with a lot of Filipino friends," said Navarro. "We often found similarities in how our cultures were

oppressed throughout history."

Each year, the leaders of FACES meet to evaluate their accomplishments in the previous year and plan events and activities for the coming year. Some of their most popular events are their annual conference and Christmas party, plus Lumpia Fest – a series of fundraisers celebrating the delicious Filipino spring roll. The next one is coming up on March 27.

Lumpia Fest, bake sales, and the other fundraising events that FACES holds each year, support their goals of providing funding for important issues in the community.

In 2013, the group raised and donated \$4,000 for disaster relief after a typhoon ravaged the Philippines. FACES has also supported the Filipino Community Center in South Seattle in establishing low-income housing for seniors and computer training for youth, as well as Filipino-American veterans who were being recognized for their military service in Washington D.C. FACES supports many other affinity groups and issues, too.

"I really like how FACES has a strong sense of helping the community," said Navarro. "And they really know how to party!"

At its peak FACES had more than 300 members. In recent years, membership has decreased to around 85 due to the significant number of people retiring from City employment. But the group is still as active as ever, and are coming up with new ideas to attract the younger generation of City employees.

"We want young people to be proud of their culture, and to help them build a support system and family in the workplace," said Rose Almachar Alves, a PROTEC17 member at City Light who has been a FACES member since the beginning.

Jonathan Batara, PROTEC17 member at Seattle Public Utilities, thinks it is really important to reach out to the next generation, as well as across cultures.

"It's important to celebrate different cultures in the workplace to understand, respect, and keep an open mind," he said.

The annual conference put on by FACES is often attended by people of all cultures as it addresses a multitude of community and social justice issues.

FACES meets regularly on the 3rd Thursday of the month. If you're interested in attending or joining, visit their website at [www.facessea.org](http://www.facessea.org), or contact: [hello@facessea.org](mailto:hello@facessea.org).



## Life After Work: Engineer by day, roller derby skater by night

**T**ransportation Engineer Kaitlynn Pecha spends her days making sure that transportation projects at the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) meet design guidelines. But after work, Pecha becomes a force to be reckoned with on roller skates as part of the Rat City Roller Derby (RCRD) league.

Pecha started at WSDOT in 2013 as a temporary Technician in the Everett Construction office and is now a permanent Transportation Engineer III for the Northwest Region. In addition to reviewing design guidelines, she also ensures that the documentation that WSDOT retains in its archives are accurate and consistent.

In roller derby, Pecha goes by the name of 'Shear Force' – #37 on the Derby Liberation Front team. She was inspired to join after seeing her first RCRD match a few years ago.

"I went to see a bout [a derby match] with my in-laws and was entranced," she said. "It looked like a ton of fun, so I jumped in!"

While she had done inline skating as a kid, she had never considered roller derby until that first match. Pecha started in the Pinkies, the beginner skater program for RCRD, in September of 2017 and by last October, she was drafted to a team.

Roller derby is a contact sport that traces its origins back to roller-skating marathons in the 1930s. In its heyday in the 1940s, roller derby was watched by millions of spectators all across the United States. Over the years, the sport became more theatrical, with scripted bouts, but it mostly faded in popularity until a resurgence in the early 2000s.

The game is played on a elliptical track with two teams of five members each skating counter clockwise. The goal is to help your jammer (a skater who scores points) to



Kaitlynn Pecha, PROTEC17 member, WSDOT Transportation Engineer, and skater for Rat City Roller Derby. *Photo by Mike Wilson Photography.*

lap skaters on the opposing team. All other skaters on the team play both offense and defense to help their jammer get past the other team, and hinder the opposing team's jammer from passing.

Pecha enjoys this physicality of gameplay as well as the teamwork and camaraderie that comes with derby.

"My favorite part of roller derby is the fast-paced decision-making and communication between teammates on the track," she said.

Today, roller derby retains some of the theatrics of its former days -- like having fun pseudonyms for players -- but is recognized as requiring skilled athleticism. While most teams are all-female, there are an increasing number of male and co-ed leagues. In 2018, the Women's Flat Track Derby Association had more than 400 member leagues. Roller derby is under consideration for an Olympic sport in 2020.

The RCRD is now in its 15th season. "Rat City" is a nickname for White Center, where their first practice location -- the Southgate Roller Rink -- is located. Formerly called the Rat City "Rollergirls," they recently rebranded to be more inclusive and empowering.

Pecha is grateful that she has a rewarding job that also allows her the time to do the things she enjoys outside of work.

"Being in a union helps me have better work-life balance," said Pecha. "It would be immensely harder to fit all of the practices, workouts, and league work required for roller derby into my schedule otherwise."

In addition to derby, Pecha also enjoys reading, crafts, and spending time with friends, family, and her pets.

You can catch Pecha skating in the next RCRD bouts on March 16 and 17. To learn more about roller derby and the Season 15 schedule visit: [ratcityrollergirls.com](http://ratcityrollergirls.com). ■

**"Being in a union helps me have better work-life balance. It would be immensely harder to fit all of the practices, workouts, and league work required for roller derby into my schedule otherwise."**

Kaitlynn Pecha, PROTEC17 member and Transportation Engineer III, WSDOT

**Have a story you'd like to share? Contact: [deidre@protec17.org](mailto:deidre@protec17.org)**

## Oregon legislature to tackle many worker issues this session

**T**he 2019 Oregon Legislative session is currently underway, and many important state-wide issues will be addressed during the long session. Major issues under consideration include housing policy, carbon pricing and clean energy, revenue reform, and education funding. Some of the bills that we're tracking include:

### Workplace Fairness Act

SB 726 attempts to reduce harassment and bullying in public workplaces by requiring that employers create clear policies to prohibit and prevent such behavior. We believe that this is an important step forward for making our workplaces more safe and productive, and that our members deserve as much protection as possible when performing their jobs.

### Prescription Drug Price Controls

Several bills have been filed that seek to address the rising cost of prescription drugs, including measures to allow importation of drugs from Canada, notices of price increases, and price disclosure on advertisements. PROTEC17 has supported efforts to rein in drug costs in past

sessions including the successful drive for price transparency beginning in the 2017 session and resulting in the successful passage of HB4005 in 2018. We have seen drug prices take up an increasing share of scarce public employer medical benefit dollars, and we believe that this issue must be addressed while providing for flexibility for doctors and patients.

### Revenue Reform and Local Flexibility

PROTEC17 continues to support efforts to reform Oregon's revenue system in ways that are more fair to working families. We believe that too much of the burden of funding government falls on the shoulders of workers and the middle class, and that large corporations continue to pay too little into a system that greatly benefits their business activities. Additionally, we are tracking measures that would give increased local flexibility to cities to address property tax inequity, and will consider supporting such efforts as they arise.

### Post-*Janus* Collective Bargaining Act Reforms

In the wake of the *Janus v. AFSCME* decision, several changes are necessary in

the Oregon Public Employee Collective Bargaining Act (PECBA). We are closely tracking discussions of any such changes and will strongly support measures that will protect and enhance workers' rights.

### PERS Reform

While there have been several proposals publicly made by the business community to reform PERS by making cuts to pension payments, at the time of this article none have made significant progress in this session. This remains a primary focus for our legislative efforts, and PROTEC17 closely follows any developments in this conversation through the Oregon PERS Coalition, and we will oppose any efforts to balance the Oregon budget by breaking promises made to public employees.

PROTEC17 is committed to advocating on behalf of workers' rights and supporting policies that will provide economic fairness to all Oregonians, and we look forward to working with the Oregon Legislature this year. For more information updated throughout the legislative session, visit: [protec17.org/government-affairs](http://protec17.org/government-affairs). ■





## 2019 legislature most diverse in Washington history; PROTEC17 priority bills address collective bargaining and membership



The 2019 Washington Legislature is the most diverse in the state's history, with the most women since 2000.  
Photo courtesy of WA LSS.



opening day of the 2019 legislative session welcomed 21 new legislators to Olympia on Jan. 14, vastly shifting the makeup of the Washington State Legislature.

This is the most diverse group of legislators in history, including the first Native American woman to serve in the House, several immigrants, a refugee, the youngest members, and the most women since the year 2000.

The 105-day session is now well underway. This year, both the House and Senate are majority Democrat, creating a bigger divide that leans strongly to the left.

We expect to see bold proposed legislation in both chambers, as Democrats are eager to take big policy steps in coordination with Governor Jay Inslee. Finally out from under the Supreme Court's McCleary mandate to fund education, they have together rolled out bold agendas on climate change, public safety, behavioral health,

school funding, protection of Puget Sound orcas, health care, and homelessness.

While Washington's economy is generating billions of new dollars since the last budget, Inslee and legislative Democrats claim it isn't enough to keep up with needs and reductions made during the last recession. Therefore, the governor and legislative Democrats have proposed a variety of tax increases including a capital gains tax, real estate excise tax increases, and B&O taxes on professionals such as lawyers and accountants.

Additionally, there are several bills addressing collective bargaining and union dues deduction that are high priority bills for PROTEC17.

House Bill (HB) 1575 and its companion Senate Bill (SB) 5623 deal with collective bargaining and dues deduction. These bills aim to "strengthen the rights of workers through collective bargaining by addressing authorizations and revocations, certifications, and the authority to deduct

and accept union dues and fees." This bill was scheduled to be first heard in the House Labor and Workplace Standards committee on Feb. 4, and in the Senate Labor and Commerce committee on Feb. 5.

Another bill that PROTEC17 is tracking is SB 5169 which addresses Labor bargaining neutrality. It wants to "ensure the neutrality of public employers and state contractors with regard to employees exercising their rights to collectively bargain."

As a reminder, PROTEC17 is working with lobbyist Rebecca Johnson this session to help us stay on top of worker-related legislation in Olympia.

The deadline for policy bills to leave committees is Feb. 22 – after this issue went to print. We will keep you updated on the latest developments on our website at [protec17.org/government-affairs](http://protec17.org/government-affairs). ■

**For more information, visit: [protec17.org/government-affairs](http://protec17.org/government-affairs)**



**Did you move?**  
Let us know! 800-783-0017

# Labor Victories

## King County Environmental Health admin members get reclassified and added staff in recognition of increasing job responsibilities

**F**or four years, the Administrative and Fiscal staff in the Environmental Health Division at Seattle-King County Public Health were advocating for job reclassification and more staff to help with their increasing job responsibilities. Finally, their patience and dedication has paid off!

In December, these staff members received financial recognition of their evolved job duties with a reclassification from Administrative and Fiscal Specialists to Permit Technicians. They were also promised that three additional staffers would be hired to help with the volume of work, which has seen a substantial increase in the last several years, due to the reduction in workforce.

Together, these hard-working PROTEC17 members mobilized their efforts over the last few months, gaining broad support throughout the Division. Using data and personal stories, they



were able to convince management of the need for better compensation and support. In addition to the reclassification to a higher wage range, they also received some extra back pay.

This is a huge win for this group of dedicated employees who had been toughing it out for a long time because they value and regard the Public Health system.

Union Representative Lorelei Walker was impressed by our members' passion, stating that their ability to organize a collective voice was exceptionally thoughtful and collaborative.

"This group demonstrated the core Union value of using a collective voice for workers' rights, and I couldn't be more proud," said Walker.

If you think your job duties have changed and need more information about the reclassification process, ask your Union Representative. ■