

insight

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS

May/June
2019
Vol 24
No. 3



OF PROTEC17 (Formerly PTE Local 17)



**Meet our new
Executive Director!**



On the Cover:

Our new Executive Director Karen Estevenin wants to hear from you! She met with the leadership team at Snohomish Health District in May, and will be making her way around Washington and Oregon to meet as many members as possible in the coming months. Read more about the unanimous decision by the REC to hire her on page 5, and read her new column on the next page. ■

News and Features



2019-21 state contract goes into effect on July 1 4
Bea's Law changes bereavement leave policy in Seattle 6-7
Pierce County member makes engineering efficient 8
Member coordinates largest road project in Clark County 9
Labor Victories: KC Coalition gets clerical error forgiven 12



Government Affairs

WA legislative session wrap-up; plus new PAC 10
Big wins and losses in Oregon legislature 11

Professional and Technical Employees Local 17

2900 Eastlake Avenue East, Ste. 300
Seattle, Washington 98102
Phone 206-328-7321
Toll-Free 800-783-0017
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

Executive Director: Karen Estevenin
Ext. 101 • karen@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

Karen Estevenin, 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



Karen Estevenin
Executive Director

A member-powered union

Early in my career, while leading a union organizing campaign in my own workplace, I was fortunate to learn an important lesson: working people hold a tremendous amount of power. In fact, nothing can substitute for the collective power leveraged by the people doing the work. This has shaped my approach to mobilizing alongside working people ever since.

The very act of organizing unified me and my co-workers, and we all felt a shift in power from the first moment we began talking about our vision for the workplace – one that would benefit the many instead of just a few. While in the end we lost the vote, make no mistake, we were a union. By working together, we gained considerable improvements and caused the company to make significant changes.

This is the sort of energy I would like to see ignite the members of PROTEC17. I want to put us on a trajectory that engages more members and develops new leaders. This is what a member-powered union is all about.

My vision for PROTEC17 is to put together programs and support systems that provide the tools and resources for members to engage confidently in this work. Members are the union, and the union's strength is directly connected to members actively and collectively engaging with each other to make improvements inside their own workplaces and in our communities.

For me, that first organizing campaign was the beginning of my 17-year career in Labor helping working people find their power and use their voice. It has been my passion, and I am both honored and privileged to be able to continue this work here at PROTEC17.

I encourage you to join me in building our member-powered union! I have no doubt that together we will power PROTEC17 into a very bright future.

In unity,

PROTEC17 members nominated for Portland Wonder Women awards

In celebration of Women's History Month in March, the City of Portland recognized employees for being exceptional role models, mentors, and workers with their Wonder Women Awards.

Over 350 nominations were received for the annual award, including over 50 PROTEC17 members. All nominees are recognized in a City ceremony.

Janet Strahl, an active PROTEC17 member, was one such award winner. Her nominator proclaimed: "*Janet is truly a wonder woman, dominating in the very male-dominated world of construction management... [she] is a jewel, and her value and contributions to the City of Portland run far beyond her job description.*"

You can view the full list of winners at: www.portlandoregon.gov/article/727812. Congratulations to all of our PROTEC17 Wonder Women at the City of Portland and elsewhere! ■

PROTEC17 scholarship applications due July 31

If you have a dependent who will be attending a college or technical school this fall, please encourage them to apply for the PROTEC17 scholarship!

We will again be awarding two \$3,000 scholarships – one to an incoming freshman and one to a student continuing their studies.

You can find the application online at: protec17.org/benefits. If you have questions about the program, please contact Deidre Girard, Communications Director at deidre@protec17.org or 800-783-0017, ext. 130. ■

2019-21 state contract in effect July 1; wins include COLA, geo-pay, and PE licensure

At midnight on April 28, the Washington State Legislature adjourned on time for the first time in a decade with an Operating Budget that fully funds PROTEC17's 2019-2021 state employee contract. This means that the contract the bargaining team negotiated last year will be implemented on July 1, 2019, as planned, with the three percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) in each year, plus a myriad of other negotiated benefits.

The PROTEC17 team, made up of state members with staff as facilitators, included Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) members Daniel Jones, Jeannie McCully, Elizabeth McGovern, Steve Morgans, Elsa Pond and Faith Shuler; Washington State Patrol (WSP) members Russ Hallgren and Mindi Mezek; and Department of Licensing (DOL) members Donna Blume and Heather Hoffmann. They worked tirelessly last summer and scored some real victories that will help PROTEC17 members thrive.

"Geographic pay was a high priority for members on the survey we sent prior to the start of negotiations," said Sarah Lorenzini, PROTEC17 Union Representative and Lead Negotiator.

"Currently, most people who work in King County cannot afford to live there," she continued. "While we proposed geographic pay for other high-cost counties in the State, the emphasis was on King County during this round of negotiations given the astronomically high costs in that area. Now, all PROTEC17 state members whose duty stations are in King County will receive a five percent premium on top of their base salary."

"We were also able to accomplish, after years of attempts, a \$5,000 incentive for WSDOT members to obtain their Professional Engineer (PE) license," said Lorenzini. "This is a step in the right direction in addressing staffing needs at WSDOT and ensuring members get the first opportunity to advance their careers at the agency if that's what they chose to do. This will also help with WSDOT succession planning by ensuring the agency has enough employees with the proper licensure to get projects done and keep the public safe on the roads."

Michael McIver, a Transportation Engineer 2 with WSDOT, plans to take advantage of the incentive next year. While he enjoys his current work, he acknowledges that without a license he can only move so far up in the engineering series. The new agreement provides an additional incentive for him to take the exam so he can potentially "keep moving up the food chain."

Given the choice between working in Seattle and Olympia, McIver says he would choose Olympia because of the cheaper cost of living.

"It would be difficult not to justify moving into the private sector while living in a high-cost area like Seattle," he said.

"While we didn't get everything we wanted in this contract, we are proud that our team remained laser-focused on the priorities we heard from the surveys, fought hard for those who have been unjustly left behind, and gave ourselves the tools to stay strong in a post-Janus world," said Lorenzini.

For full details on the new agreement, visit the webpage for your department at protec17.org/members. ■

Find more news on our website: www.protec17.org/news

PROTEC17 Regional Executive Committee (REC) approves new Executive Director, budget at spring meeting

Your Regional Executive Committee (REC) – the policy-making body of PROTEC17 – gathered at the Teamsters Hall in Tukwila, Wash. on April 13 to make big decisions about the future of our union, including approving the 2019 budget and selecting our new Executive Director.

PROTEC17 President Hossein Barahimi, a Transportation Planner at King County Metro, opened the meeting by swearing in new Executive Board officers Cindy Watanabe-Mezs (Secretary-Treasurer) and Sarah Spotts (Trustee), as well as REC delegates from across the region. In his subsequent speech he talked about how our union and its members triumphed over many challenges in 2018, including several leadership changes and the Supreme Court case, *Janus v. AFSCME*, which altered the landscape for public sector unions. He also thanked the REC, staff, and various committee members for the additional work they put in over the last year to ensure our union not only survived these challenges, but came out stronger.

Acting Executive Director Anthony Davidson echoed Barahimi's sentiments and took a moment to thank the staff for their commitment to this organization, and to the members for their patience during times of immense change. Staff and members then reported on various contract settlements, and provided legislative reports for both Washington and Oregon.

The proposed budget for 2019 was also carefully reviewed by the delegation and approved, as was the collective bargaining agreement for the staff contract, which the REC reviews during each term.

In a closed door meeting with only REC delegates (no staff), the membership was presented with the next big item on the agenda – to decide on our next Executive Director. Two members of the hiring committee, Cindy Watanabe-Mezs (King County) and Paul Cone (Portland),



The Executive Director hiring committee, consisting of PROTEC17 Board members and REC-appointed delegates, pose with new Executive Director Karen Estevenin as she signs her employment contract at the April 2019 REC meeting.

recapped the months-long process for selecting an Executive Director. Armed with the job criteria, candidate recommendations, and an employment agreement to review, the REC delegates voted unanimously to select Karen Estevenin for the role because they felt she demonstrated the skills and experience that PROTEC17 was looking for in a leader.

"We're thrilled that Karen accepted the offer to lead PROTEC17," said Paul Cone, hiring committee member. "During the recruitment process, we were amazed by her organizing experience, and we are excited to work with her as she leads us in building more member power."

Estevenin, who previously worked for Teamsters 117, and was working in the Teamsters Hall that day, celebrated the good news with members at a ceremonial signing of her employment agreement at the end of the meeting.

Other important events that occurred at this meeting included the presentation of a Gold Card to long-time member-leader Mark Rauchenstein from Clark County. In addition to his work as a commercial real estate appraiser for the County, Rauchenstein has been a

PROTEC17 Steward, Chapter President, REC Delegate, and Labor Council Delegate for many years. He is also a veteran who was recently honored for his service by Senator Maria Cantwell at the Clark County Central Labor Council. ■

"We're thrilled that Karen accepted the offer to lead PROTEC17. During the recruitment process, we were amazed by her organizing experience, and we are excited to work with her as she leads us in building more member power."

Paul Cone, PROTEC17 member, REC delegate, and hiring committee member, *City of Portland*

Bea's Law: Seattle member honors memory of daughter by pushing for new policy to improve City's bereavement leave

Surrounded by family and friends, PROTEC17 member Rachel Alder and her wife Erin honored their daughter on May 13 – the day after Mother's Day – as the City of Seattle proclaimed it Bea's Day. The commemoration was more than a year in the making after the brief life of Bea prompted an advocacy campaign to improve the family leave policy for employees at the City who suffer the loss of a child.

Bea was born in November 2017 and lived just a short 36 hours. While the Alders were grieving their tragic loss, they learned via email that Rachel would only receive three bereavement leave days.

"It was surreal," said Erin Alder. "Rachel was in the hospital, we were planning a funeral, and then we got this news. We just couldn't process it."

"It's been very healing to share our story and to honor Bea's memory by improving the family care leave policy for other employees who are grieving the loss of a child."

Rachel Alder,
PROTEC17 member and Counselor,
Aging and Disability Services
City of Seattle



PROTEC17 member Rachel Alder (left), Seattle Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda (center) and Erin Alder (right) with the Bea's Day proclamation. *Photos courtesy of Joseph Peha, City of Seattle.*

Luckily, Rachel had a very supportive supervisor and co-workers in the office of Aging and Disability Services in the Human Services Department at the City who generously donated leave so that the Alders could process their grief in their own time.

A few months later, one of Rachel's co-workers, PROTEC17 Steward Sarah Barkman, reached out to Union Representative Shaun Van Eyk to see if there was something he could do, and it started the ball rolling. With the Alders support, Van Eyk began to contact Seattle City Councilmembers and the Mayor's office to build support for expansion of the recent paid family leave policy.

"The family leave policy that we negotiated with the City in 2018 did not include provisions for the loss of a child or birthing partner," said Van Eyk. "We thought it was really important to make this change so that other members would not have to go through what Rachel and her family went through."

Councilmembers Teresa Mosqueda and Lorena Gonzalez wholeheartedly agreed and played an integral role in pushing this issue forward. Mayor Jenny Durkan has been very supportive, too. The policy also has broad community-based support from organizations like NARAL and Planned Parenthood.

Despite their tragedy, the Alders thought it was important to be the voice for other employees who might not be able to find their own because of grief or stigma. Recently, they have connected with other bereavement leave advocates across the country and are hoping to help make broader, nation-wide improvements.

"We were really lucky," said Erin. "We had a tremendous amount of support from family, friends and co-workers who stood by our side the whole time, and we had the resources to take the time we needed. But not everyone has that kind of support system."

FEATURES

On June 5, Seattle City Council unanimously approved the expanded paid family care ordinance to include paid time off after the death of a child up to age 18, as well as if a partner dies from pregnancy-related complications. The ordinance will go into effect immediately.

Meanwhile, PROTEC17 and other members of the Coalition of City Unions are looking at additional language to the paid family leave policy in the contract, as negotiations for the next one are currently underway.

"We couldn't have done any of this without PROTEC17," said Rachel. "An active and supportive union helped us have a voice, get in the room with the right people, and push for change."

Some of the Alders many supporters gathered with them at Seattle City Hall on Bea's Day, including Rachel's dad, who flew in from Nashville, her aunt from Pasco, co-

workers from HSD, as well as Erin's family and co-workers, and PROTEC17's Van Eyk. Even representatives from Human Resources at Erin's company came to show their support and to learn about what the progressive, family-friendly policy might look like.

"Bea's Day was really special," Rachel said. "It was the perfect way to honor our little fighter, surrounded by so many of our loved ones."

"It's been very healing to share our story and to honor Bea's memory by improving the family care policy for other employees who are grieving the loss of a child," she continued.

The Alders are expecting another baby any day now - Rachel is due at the end of June. Everyone at PROTEC17 wishes the Alders all the best! ■

"We had a tremendous amount of support from family, friends and co-workers who stood by our side the whole time, and we had the resources to take the time we needed. But not everyone has that kind of support system."

Erin Alder,
Wife of PROTEC17 member Rachel Alder and co-advocate for changes to the family care leave policy

The Alders with the Bea's Day proclamation surrounded by their vast support system of family, friends and co-workers.



Pierce County member writes the book on professional standards for engineers and technicians

As an expert in Computer-Aided Design (CAD) and Computer-Aided Engineering (CAE), PROTEC17 member Kirstin Thornton spends her days streamlining processes that make everyone's jobs at Pierce County easier. From transportation and roads to maintenance and sewers, she supports engineering projects that effect all areas of Pierce County.

Thornton started with the County in 2007 in the budget and financing office after graduating from St. Martin's University with a degree in Mathematics. In her 12 years with Pierce County, she's worked in construction inspection and design groups as an Engineering Technician before landing her current job as an Engineering Technician 3 in the Program Management group within the County Engineer's office two years ago.

With her broad background in project management and expertise in AutoCAD – the computer program that engineers use to design systems and projects – Thornton's days consist of providing CAD/CAE support to other Engineers and Engineering Techs.

One of her big projects has been to create a manual to standardize engineering processes and procedures throughout the County. This manual helps make workflows more efficient by creating templates, consistent symbols, and an enhanced file management system for engineering projects.

"It's really rewarding to create processes and procedures that make everyone's day-to-day job a little easier, and operations more efficient for Pierce County," said Thornton.

In addition to the manual, Thornton conducts training and provides continual guidance to employees at Pierce County on best practices to ensure that everyone is on the same page with regard to using the new procedures. She also is managing the development of a corresponding webpage with the content of the manuals.

Thornton has her hands in many other projects as well, including using Auto-CAD for internal space-planning at Pierce County; the ongoing management of technology assets so that Engineers and Techs can efficiently run the software they

need to do their jobs; and planning trainings to advance her team's work goals.

Recently, Thornton decided to get more involved with PROTEC17. With contract negotiations coming up, she wanted to get the latest information first-hand. Plus, long-time member-leader Troy Lee has started to talk about retiring within the next few years. Thornton wanted to make sure that all of his institutional and union knowledge didn't leave when he leaves, so she stepped up to participate on the Pierce County Chapter leadership team as a Regional Executive Committee (REC) delegate.

At the chapter meeting in May, the team discussed new events and activities to get people more involved during contract negotiations and beyond, including a potential summer social event.

"I have lots of ideas, and I'm excited to be a part of this team," she said.

When she's not working or doing union stuff, Thornton enjoys spending time with her family, including her six-year-old son, who loves the new PROTEC17 swag! ■

"It's really rewarding to create processes and procedures that make everyone's day-to-day job a little easier, and operations more efficient for Pierce County."

Kirstin Thornton,
PROTEC17 Member and Engineering
Technician 3, *Pierce County*



PROTEC17 member Kirstin Thornton in the Tacoma Mall Office Building which houses many Pierce County engineers.

PROTEC17 member helps turn a rural road into a major arterial in burgeoning Clark County

Robin Washington, Capital Projects Manager III and 19-year employee at Clark County Public Works, is dedicated to improving the County for all of its residents, including motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, business owners, community groups, and wildlife.

One of her biggest projects – NE 119th Street – will expand a once rural farm road into a major east-west arterial for the growing suburbs of Vancouver, Wash. When the fourth and final phase is complete, the three-mile stretch will include all new bike lanes, sidewalks, stormwater drainage, water and sewer lines, and a 37-acre wetland habitat for fish, birds and native plants. The nearly seven-year project is the largest road project the County has ever done. It is expected to wrap up in early 2020 at the cost of about \$55 million, coming from state, federal, county and developer partnership funds.

As a Capital Projects Manager, Washington is responsible for managing the budget, scope and schedule of each project. She works with her interdisciplinary



Above: PROTEC17 member Robin Washington points to the map of the NE 119th Street project in Clark County. Below: Washington at the wetland habitat portion of NE 119th.

nary Clark County team – from surveyors and property specialists to designers and engineers – to get the job done. In addition, Washington works closely with community groups to get feedback from local residents about the various projects.

“One of the most important skills in my job is listening,” she said. “You have to be good at hearing what people aren’t telling you – plus you never know where the next good idea is going to come from.”

In addition to NE 119th Street, Washington is managing five other projects in the County. She likes the challenge of constantly switching gears and the variety that comes with each day. But the NE 119th Street project has been one of her favorites, especially because of the wetland mitigation piece and the overall benefit to the community.

“What we do here in Clark County Public Works is very important to the citizens of Clark County, and I love seeing

“What we do here in Clark County Public Works is very important to the citizens of Clark County, and I love seeing the results of our great projects, large and small.”

Robin Washington, PROTEC17 member and Capital Projects Manager III, Clark County

the results of our great projects, large and small,” said Washington.

Recently, Washington was honored by the Neighborhood Associations Council of Clark County for her dedication to its citizens. Having grown up in Portland, she lives just across the bridge in Oregon where she enjoys gardening and spending time with her granddaughter. ■



Have a story you'd like to share? Contact: deidre@protec17.org

WA state legislature ends on time with some labor wins; PROTEC17 building new member-led political action committee

The 2019 Washington State Legislative session ended on time, as scheduled, on April 28. It was another race to beat the clock as legislators from all sides held on until the end regarding their budget preferences and core policy issues.

In the end, all three budgets (Operating, Transportation and Capital) were completed with positive and negative outcomes for PROTEC17 members.

Passage of the Transportation and Operating budget fully funded all state employee contracts negotiated in 2018, including all general wage increases, medical plans and special class salary step advancement for classes with current salary lag and recruitment or retention issues. All terms will become effective on July 1, 2019.

Despite the attempts of PROTEC17 to provide continuing levels of funding for the REAL ID program at the Department of Licensing (DOL), legislators trimmed the allocation to a point that may affect staffing of Licensing Service Representative (LSR) positions in the coming biennium. PROTEC17 continues to work with the DOL to stave off any staffing cuts leading up to full compliance with REAL ID in 2020.

PROTEC17, as part of the Public Health Roundtable lobbying effort, worked on both policy and budget issues this session. A key success for public health professionals was the passage of House Bill (HB) 1497. This bill mandates that the funding for the public health system must be restructured to support foundational public health services. The law updates a statewide set of core public health services which the system is responsible for providing in a consistent and uniform way in every community in the state. We also had success in increasing funding for foundational health by \$22 million.

Another policy bill of importance to public-sector unions was the passage of HB 1575 (*Janus Compliance Law*), to amend



PROTEC17 members and staff attended a luncheon for King County Executive Dow Constantine, who has been a very labor-friendly candidate.

state law in order to align it with a new interpretation of federal law effecting union membership.

Last summer, the U.S. Supreme Court, by a vote of 5-4, reversed a unanimous decision from 40 years ago that upheld the right of unions to charge a fair-share fee to all members of the bargaining unit for services delivered by the union, including grievance resolution, contract bargaining, defending members from inappropriate discipline, etc. The new interpretation by the current U.S. Supreme Court imposes so-called “right-to-work” restrictions on all public employee unions nationwide, allowing workers to withdraw from the union and not pay dues, while still requiring the unions to represent them.

Though HB 1575 adjusts state law to be in federal compliance by removing the union security provision, there are other key provisions that were added to strengthen the rights of workers to unionize, such as:

- Reducing the interest needed from non-represented employee groups seeking to unionize to just over 50%;
- Adding various methods for workers to more easily authorize union dues pay-

roll deduction without impediment by an employer’s processing policy; and

- Codifying that public employers and public employee organizations are not liable in claims or any action for deducted union fees that were permitted by law and deducted before the Supreme Court decision last July.

Now that session is over, PROTEC17 is looking ahead to election season. With primaries this August and mid-term elections this November, we are heading into peak endorsement time. PROTEC17 is looking into building a more robust, member-involved Political Action Committee (PAC). New Executive Director Karen Estevenin is currently working with staff and members to determine a structure and process. If you’re interested in participating via your union in the political process for your area, stay tuned for more information in the coming months!

In the next issue of *Insight*, we will have a list of worker-friendly candidates in City, County and State races. Remember: your union dues money is never used to endorse candidates – only voluntary contributions to the PAC are used for this purpose. ■

Big victory, big loss in the Oregon legislature; session continues

As the end of the 2019 Oregon legislative session approaches, several important bills have moved forward to the governor's desk. These include both victories and challenges for labor, as well as opportunities for future growth and action.

In positive news, two strong, worker-friendly bills have moved towards final signing as of the writing of this article, including the Workplace Fairness Act and the Public Employee Collective Bargaining Act. However, cuts to the the Public Employee Retirement System narrowly passed in a disappointing blow to public workers.

Workplace Fairness Act

In a major win for workers across the state, Senate Bill (SB) 726 makes substantial progress in protecting Oregonians from discrimination and harassment in the workplace, and providing them with effective avenues for recourse against such actions. The act increases the statute of limitations for filing claims against harassers and discriminators from one year to five years, bars employers from forcing employees to sign non-disclosure agreements regarding harassment as during settlement agreements, and allows employers to void severance agreements with supervisors who are being terminated for harassment and discrimination. PROTEC17 joined a coalition of unions and progressive organizations in supporting SB 726, and we applaud the legislature for taking this major step.

Public Employee Collective Bargaining Act (PECBA)

House Bill (HB) 2016 will make significant positive changes to the Public Employment Collective Bargaining Act (PECBA) which contains statutes govern-



ing public union and labor relations practices. It requires employers to provide unions with information on new employees and time to meet with them for orientation purposes within 30 days of employment, as well as establishing unions rights to use employer email and facilities to conduct union business. Further, it provides for use of employer time by designated representatives of the union for union business, including attending investigatory meetings, labor management committees, and new employee orientations. Previous versions of the bill had attempted to protect public employees from release of personal information to third parties. While the final bill does not include this provision, a government transparency panel that will meet during the interim between legislative sessions will take up this issue for consideration.

Public Employee Retirement System

Despite these victories, Oregon public employees saw a significant loss in the passage of SB 1049, which contains major changes to the public employee retirement system and includes cuts to public employee benefits. These cuts come in the form of a redirect of contributions which currently go into employees' Individual Account Program (IAP) which is 6% of an

employees wage. SB 1049 redirects 2.5% of PERS 1 and 2 members wages and 0.75% of OPSRP wages into a third stabilization account which will be used to pay down the unfunded liability in PERS until the system reaches 90% funding, up from current 80% funding. Actuarial analysis predicts that this will result in a 7.5% reduction for PERS 1 members' IAP after 5 years, a 12.5% reduction for PERS 2 members IAP after 10 years, and a 7.1% reduction in OPSRP members' IAP after 20 years.

This represents a major cut to public employee benefits, and PROTEC17 stood with Oregon labor, via the Keep Oregon's Promise campaign, in opposition to this component of SB 1049 throughout the legislative process. Lawmakers heard from tens of thousands of public employees, and the voices and united strength of our members were heard, even if the final outcome was not desirable. Key members of the legislature have stated that after this cut, future fixes to the unfunded liability of PERS cannot come at the expense of public workers. Additionally, there could be legal action moving forward against the bill, and PROTEC17 will track such activities closely as participants of the Oregon PERS Coalition.

While we are disappointed that the legislature chose this course of action, we have hopes that the strength of organized public employee labor made a meaningful impact, and that we can stand in unity for the challenges ahead of us.

If you have questions regarding the 2019 Oregon legislative session, please contact PROTEC17's Oregon Legislative Advocate Elliot Levin (elliott@protec17.org) for more information. ■

For more information, visit: protec17.org/government-affairs

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

Labor Victories

Coalition of Unions pushes King County to rectify vacation error without penalizing members

In 2018, King County caught a clerical error that impacted vacation accrual rates for two PROTEC17 members and another 13 members in the King County Coalition of Unions.

Because these members were erroneously and unknowingly given additional vacation time, management had proposed creating a plan for repayment by deducting vacation leave from their accrual banks. When the affected union members received this notification, it was very stressful, as it impacted planned vacations and time with family. The Coalition believed this was not an acceptable solution.

Teamsters 117 took the lead on this issue with the full support of the Coalition, including PROTEC17. Through multiple conversations with legal counsel, the Coalition eventually got the County to forgive a substantial portion of the excess vacation time for all 15 members. This included 77 hours for one PROTEC17 member who reached out to us to let us know how grateful she is.



“Thank you so much for your hard work so I don’t have to pay back the overaccrued hours,” she said. “It is so important to my family. I was jumping for joy and will tell everyone how hard you worked and that I appreciate it.”

This was a small, but very important victory – especially for the 15 impacted union members, who would have had vacation debt through no fault of their own. The error has since been corrected for all accrual rates moving forward.

“There is always a lot of behind-the-scenes work done on behalf of members by the Coalition,” said PROTEC17 King County Union Representative and Coalition Co-Chair Lorelei Walker. “We want to make sure that members are being treated fairly and that, as much as possible, employees aren’t negatively impacted by decisions – and in this case, an error – made by management.”

If you have an issue that you think PROTEC17 can help with, please contact your Union Representative. ■