

# insight

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS

OF PROTEC17 (Formerly PTE Local 17)

July/Aug  
2019  
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## Tacoma members take action!

Plus, meet the future of PROTEC17!



### On the Cover:

Nearly 100 PROTEC17 members at the City of Tacoma showed up in force before a contract negotiations session in July to support their bargaining team and to let management know that they demand fairness and respect. Read more about the action on pages 8-9. ■

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**RUN FOR OFFICE!**

## PROTEC17 Executive Board Election Notice

Nominations are now open for the following PROTEC17 Executive Board positions: President (currently held by Hossein Barahimi) and Trustee #2 (currently held by Jessica Garcia). The terms are three (3) years and will expire in 2023.

#### Details:

- (1) To be eligible for nomination to an Executive Board position, a member must have been in good standing in PROTEC17 for a period of at least six (6) months immediately prior to the nomination.
- (2) No member of PROTEC17 shall run for more than one Executive Board office concurrently.
- (3) Nominations must be in writing by the person making the nomination, and must be at the PROTEC17 office, 2900 Eastlake Avenue East, Suite #300, Seattle, Washington 98102, by 5 p.m. on Mon., Oct. 7, 2019.
- (4) Names of all nominees, except those who declare in writing that they decline the nomination, will appear on the ballot.
- (5) Candidates may submit a statement of up to 200 words and a photo of themselves. These will go out with the ballot and must be submitted to the union office by 5 p.m. on Thurs., Oct. 10, 2019.
- (6) A ballot will be sent to each member in good standing at his/her last known mailing address.
- (7) The ballots will be counted at 5 p.m. on Tues., Nov. 12, 2019 at the PROTEC17 office.

Any questions regarding the election should be addressed to: PROTEC 17 Election Chair, 2900 Eastlake Avenue East, Suite 300, Seattle WA 98102, or union@protec17.org.

### insight

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Karen Estevenin  
Executive Director

## We decide how strong our union will be

**W**e decide how strong our union will be. Every member, every voice, every day. Not the employers, not the anti-union groups that want to take us down, nor the orchestrated attempts to divide working people through fear. Working people are resilient and connected through the bonds of our labor. We must never forget this, but we must also know that it takes commitment and hard work to build our power.

In stark contrast to all of the hate and turmoil we've witnessed nationally, members of PROTEC17 have stepped up to face challenges in new ways in the months since our last issue. Mobilizing collectively, building support and solidarity through sharing stories and finding common ground, and taking action to get real results. It's working.

The halls of the Tacoma Public Utilities building reverberated on July 22 with the chants: "*What do we want? Fair contract! When do we want it? Now!*" (See pages 8-9). Management walked into the negotiations room like a line of paper dolls, pasted non-expressions on their faces, and without much to hold them up. And significant progress was made at the table that day - more than the negotiations team had seen from management in several weeks. It was only through the collective action of members standing together with a common message that made it happen.

More member-led actions are taking place across the union, and I enthusiastically expect this trend to continue and grow. I'm excited for the start of several upcoming programs that will help develop leaders and stewards in these efforts. These programs will focus on learning the tools to address issues at the lowest levels possible to get positive results, including the traditional grievance process as well as a much more effective method - collective action.

So, although the so-called "Freedom Foundation" and "Opt-out Today" union-busters are working extra hard to persuade members to drop their union membership, we're sticking together - and securing more victories everyday (p. 6-7). As we continue to work together for improvements at our workplaces, we are building our union power. So, "*Who's here?*" City of Tacoma members said it best: "*PROTEC's here!*"

In unity,

## Governor Inslee signs 2019-21 State contract



Photo courtesy of: Office of the Governor

On June 17, Washington state Governor Jay Inslee signed the PROTEC17 state contract, making official all of the negotiated changes to the 2019-21 agreement. The membership ratified the agreement last fall, and it was fully funded in the Washington legislature this spring.

All changes - including the three percent cost-of-living adjustment for both 2019 and 2020, other wage increases, and improved benefits - went into effect on July 1, 2019.

The state contract runs on a two-year cycle in conjunction with the state's biennium budget. The 2021-23 contract will be negotiated in 2020. PROTEC17 will be surveying members who work for the state early next year to get a sense of the priorities for next time.

Thank you to the negotiations team for their strong work and help in getting the best contract possible! Some of the team members stood with Gov. Inslee at the signing ceremony, pictured above, including: Heather Hoffmann (DOL), Faith Shuler (WSDOT), Steve Morgans (WSDOT), Daniel Jones (WSDOT), and Mindi Mezek (WSP). ■

## PROTEC17 supports and celebrates LGBTQ+ members at Seattle Pride Parade

PROTEC17 marched in this year's Seattle Pride Parade on June 29. Staff, members, and their families joined with MLK Labor and many other unions to support and celebrate our LGBTQ+ members and friends.

This is the first time that PROTEC17 had a contingency in the parade, though many of our members march with the government agencies for which they work.

Pride month is celebrated each June in honor of the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City, which marked a tipping point for the LGBTQ+ rights movement in the United States. This year was the 50th anniversary of the uprising and was commemorated with events throughout the country, including in this year's Seattle Pride Parade.

Under new leadership, PROTEC17 is making strides to be a stronger support system for our members, especially those from historically marginalized communities, and to be at the forefront of progressive issues that impact

our members, their families, and our communities.

"It's important for PROTEC17 to represent at the Pride Parade because it shows that we are an inclusive union," said Union Representative Steven Pray, pictured with the 'Proud to be Union' sign below. "It shows that we are a progressive organization that supports all workers, regardless of who they love."

Member leader Anne Alfred also marched in the parade, passing out PROTEC17 rainbow stickers to thousands of parade-goers who lined 4th Avenue in downtown Seattle.

"I loved marching in the Pride Parade," said Alfred. "Unions fight for workers' rights, and workers' rights are human rights. The parade was a fun way to celebrate that we fight for all workers, no matter who people are, and no matter how we all live in the world."

You can find more images from the parade on our Facebook page: [facebook.com/PROTEC17](https://facebook.com/PROTEC17). ■

PROTEC17 staff, members and their families at the Seattle Pride Parade.



Find more news on our website: [www.protec17.org/news](http://www.protec17.org/news)

## New PROTEC17 staffers on board to grow union, build member power, and take care of business

**T**here have been lots of changes happening at PROTEC17 since the arrival of Executive Director Karen Estevenin in May, including the hiring of new staff members Paul Marvy and Xuan-Trang Tran-Thien.

Marvy joins PROTEC17 as a Project Administrator working on everything from assessing legal and internal policies to identifying paths for organizing new members. His own career path has been as diverse as his assignment. He has been a data analyst for a public health project at the University of California; a public defender in King County, legal council at the Northwest Justice Project, and a strategic organizer for Change to Win, a national coalition of Labor and allies.

Most recently, Marvy worked locally for Teamsters 117 as Research Director, gathering and using information to improve the Local's negotiating, organizing and representation.

Tran-Thien is a seasoned community, political and labor organizer, coalition leader, facilitator, and leadership trainer with over two decades of experience. She understands the particular dynamics of community-led and membership-driven organizations, and specializes in outreach, base-building, community and political campaign planning and design, and leadership development strategies that help expand organizations' public involvement, influence, inclusion, and support.

At PROTEC17, Tran-Thien will be working with staff and member-leaders to identify, plan and lead strategic growth campaigns that strengthen our union membership. Part of that effort will also be to help shape PROTEC17's leadership development program.

"I'm especially looking forward to working with members to build our union strength and power on the job, and advance our common vision for a just world," said Tran-Thien.



New staff members Paul Marvy and Xuan-Trang Tran-Thien started at PROTEC17 in July.

Previously, Tran-Thien worked with the Japanese American Citizens League, Asian Pacific Islander Americans for Civic Empowerment, AFL-CIO, Washington Alliance for Immigrant & Refugee Justice, UFCW's Justice for Janitors campaigns, and helped found Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Healthcare 775NW.

These staffers are a pivotal part of the new vision for PROTEC17. Estevenin is currently embarking on a member-focused strategic planning process for 2020-2022 to further define our priorities for the next three years. As part of the the planning process, a survey was sent to all members in July, and further input will be sought at meetings this fall.

"I'm excited to welcome Paul and Tran-Thien to our staff," said Estevenin. "Their combined expertise - along with the rest of our stellar staff and dedicated member leaders - is just what PROTEC17 needs to help us foster the next generation of leaders, build more power within our membership, and strengthen our influence in the wider Labor community." ■

**"Their combined expertise... is just what PROTEC17 needs to help us foster the next generation of leaders, build more power within our membership, and strengthen our influence in the wider Labor community."**

Karen Estevenin,  
PROTEC17 Executive Director

## VICTORIES!

### Kitsap members negotiate mileage reimbursement

**W**hen the Kitsap Public Health District informed PROTEC17 of their plan to change the vehicle expense reimbursement form, we demanded to bargain the impacts. Utilizing the labor management process, PROTEC17 ensured that our members wouldn't be sitting dangerously in their cars on the side of the road entering mileage. We clarified that members would be able to drive off their route for a lunch break at a restaurant or a park and that the language was clear regarding travel mileage on days our members telecommute. We also worked to guarantee that all the health district's departments utilized this form in an equal and even-handed manner.

### King County Social Workers get 7% raise after nearly two decades of

**S**ocial Workers at Seattle-King County Public Health clinics, who service some of the most vulnerable people in our communities, negotiated their most substantial wage increase in 18 years. After years of receiving only cost-of-living increases, arguments were made to adjust the wage scale to reflect the general underpayment of social workers, who are historically women and people of color.

"We as social workers are underpaid, under-acknowledged, and often do not have much of a voice despite being some of the strongest advocates for underserved, vulnerable communities," said Social Worker Cristin King. "PROTEC17 helped us find our voice and power that ultimately ensured that we are more fairly represented. This has meant better compensation and an overall better understanding among colleagues about our work."

While there is still some work to do at the County to base wage comparisons on more accurate and unbiased data, this is a huge step forward and win for this hard-working group. There will surely be further conversations about external and internal equity moving forward, but for now, PROTEC17 members are celebrating.

"Receiving this pay raise feels like the life changing work I am doing as a social worker is finally being valued," said Social Worker Mary Dunbar (pictured, right). "I did not come into this field to make a lot of money, but because I am motivated to help families heal, and to give back in some way to my community. With this raise, I should be able to afford to continue to do this good work in our community."



### PROTEC17 members celebrate Retro Day

**O**n June 27, PROTEC17 members at King County received paychecks capturing their retroactive pay back to January 1, 2019. This represented a general 4% increase as well as additional wage increases for negotiated classifications. Members proudly sported stickers and buttons and enjoyed morning donuts to celebrate.



## DOL member reinstated to reach 30-year career service mark

**A** PROTEC17 member at the Department of Licensing (DOL) was unjustly terminated after spending 29 and 1/3 years of her career there. After filing a grievance for lack of just cause, PROTEC17 fought to get her job back at DOL so that she can earn the remainder of her employment credits before retiring. Without reaching 30 years, she would have earned \$1,000 less per month in retirement benefits.

## Member gets job back after wrongful termination

**P**ROTEC17 won an arbitration against King County Metro Transit for Transit Chief Ruth Hoogstrate who was wrongfully terminated in 2017. Hoogstrate was awarded her return to work as well as back pay and benefits. Many PROTEC17 members volunteered to assist with the arbitration or testify as a witness, including longtime Steward and Transit Chief Barry Samet - pictured below with Union Representative Denise Cobden (left) and Hoogstrate (center). "The strength of our union is the most important asset we have in fighting unjust treatment by management," said Samet.

## wage stagnation



## Contract language secures reallocation into higher classification

**B**ack in 2016, PROTEC17 took a Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) member's reallocation to the Personnel Resources Board, which overturned both WSDOT's and the Office of Fiscal Management's decisions and gave the member the higher classification job for a specific period of time, with some backpay. When it was discovered that he was doing the work for more than six months, PROTEC17 filed a grievance stating that he should be permanently placed in that classification per the contract language. For state employees, anyone performing job duties for more than six months shall be permanently placed in the position. The grievance reached settlement, and now the member has the right to be placed into a position at the higher classification when one for which he's qualified becomes available. He will also be getting back pay with the wage scale from the new 2019-21 contract because the grievance was settled after July 1, 2019, when the new contract went into effect.

This victory is important because it was specifically the language in the PROTEC17 contract that made it possible. This member is getting thousands of dollars in backpay and the chance to more easily move back into the higher classification. That's the value of having a union and a strong contract!

## Tacoma members take action: ‘Fair wages and respect now’ to City negotiators

**N**early 100 members at the City of Tacoma showed up to support their contract negotiations team as they walked into their bargaining session on July 22 at the Tacoma Public Utilities (TPU) building.

The idea for the action was born at a Tacoma Chapter meeting in early July, and members really took pride and ownership of the event to make it successful in a short period of time. Working with Union Representative Brent Wagar and Organizer Melissa Mafua, PROTEC17 members rallied their co-workers to attend. Members came from all across the City – including many from outside of the TPU building – to spend their lunch breaks at the rally. Members of other unions also came out to show their solidarity.

Negotiations for the contract, which expired in December 2018, have been ongoing since February. Members felt that the City has been dragging their heels and taking an anti-union and unfair stance at the negotiations table. Non-represented

workers at the City recently received a three percent wage adjustment, but the City thus far had not offered anywhere near that for union members. Plus they were not offering retroactive pay, despite the fact that the delay in negotiations was their doing.

PROTEC17 members lined the hall outside of the conference room and held balloons and signs that read “Respect Now,” “Fair Wages Now,” and “Time to Move Tacoma.” There were ‘union violation’ tickets that members handed to management as they walked into the room. Members also chanted “Who’s here? PROTEC’s here!” and “What do we want? Fair contract! When do we want it? Now!” You can find more images and a video from the day on our Facebook and YouTube channels.

The negotiations team – Brett Burrows, Jim McDaniel, Drayton McLaren, John Reeves, Mike Sowards, and Renee Thompson – was thrilled with the action and the strong showing of support. Other PROTEC17 staff attended the event as

well to show their support including: Executive Director Karen Estevenin, Laura Elia, Deidre Girard, Sarah Lorenzini, Paul Marvy, and Rachel Whiltside, who came up from her assignment in Portland to help with morning preparations.

Before the event, negotiations team member Thompson said: “I want the City to see that our union is strong and that we expect to be treated respectfully and equitably.”

The rally did just that. Not only was this action an incredible showing of solidarity and strength, but it sent a clear message to City negotiators that PROTEC17 members demand respect and fairness at the negotiations table and in the next contract.

While negotiations are still ongoing, there has been some positive movement since the action. If you are a Tacoma member, check your email for regular updates about the status of negotiations. If you need to update your personal email with PROTEC17, visit our website or notify your Union Representative. ■

PROTEC17 members lined the halls outside of the negotiations room as their bargaining team and management walked in.



## FEATURES



Above: Tacoma members ready to hand out union violations to City of Tacoma management. Below: the PROTEC17 negotiations team: Jim McDaniel, Mike Sowards, and Drayton McLaren (back row); Brett Burrows, John Reeves, and Renee Thompson (front row).



**“I want the City to see that our union is strong and that we expect to be treated respectfully and equitably.”**

Renee Thompson, PROTEC17  
Negotiations Team Member

## Young members give input to help shape union's future

**A**s many long-time members begin to retire and new workers come on board into their professional positions, PROTEC17 is looking to learn what younger members want to see in their union, and to find ways to engage them in leadership roles.

This summer, PROTEC17's intern Xochi Suarez, set up two focus groups of young members to get their feedback – one in King County and one at the Benton-Franklin Health District (BFHD) in Tri-Cities, Washington. Questions for the focus group ranged from “*What was your first impression of the union?*” to “*what do you want out of your union experience?*” and “*what's the best way to communicate with you?*”

Suarez, an education major at the University of Washington, came to PROTEC17 from the Washington State Labor Council (WSLC) Union Summer program, which places college students at unions across the state to learn about Labor and union work. In her short stint at PROTEC17, she hit the ground running, developing the focus group questions, coordinating logistics, and recruiting young members to join through phone calls and emails.

Young members who work for King County participated in a focus group on July 23.



Tri-Cities focus group members with PROTEC17 intern Xochi Suarez (right).

About 17 members in all provided their feedback. Some of the major take-aways were on the topics of communication strategies, social events and opportunities to connect, targeted asks, and why young members may be hesitant to get involved.

For communication, young members expressed more interest in texting and Instagram than emails and Facebook. The young members in the focus groups were also very interested in social and volunteer events with their peers across the union.

As for involvement, they suggested having more targeted asks (i.e. issue- or interest-based meetings), or just asking them directly to engage in something specific.

Additional feedback was that the focus-group setting appealed to younger members as it is more specific than a broad chapter meeting, where they feel like they don't have significant contributions to make because it appears that things are all taken care of by long-time members.

Members across both focus groups expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to give feedback. King County members were excited to meet other young professional colleagues – some sitting in the same building – that they didn't know.

“The input from these members was incredibly constructive and valuable, and will definitely play a role in shaping the PROTEC17 strategic plan for 2020-2022,” said Executive Director Karen Estevenin, who attended the BFHD focus group.

Because of the success of the focus groups, there will likely be many more opportunities for young members to give input and to get more involved. If you're interested in meeting other young members or you're a long-time member who'd like to get younger members involved in your activities, reach out to Organizer Melissa Mafua at [melissa@protec17.org](mailto:melissa@protec17.org). ■



## Getting politically active: PROTEC17 political action committee revamped

**B**y the time this issue of *Insight* hits mailboxes, the 2019 political season will nearly be in full swing. In preparation, and with the input of members, PROTEC17 spent the summer rethinking our political program and has started to roll out some big changes.

This year, members have gotten more involved in the endorsement process across Washington state. From the Seattle City Council races to the Spokane mayoral race, members have stepped up to ask the tough questions to ensure that their representatives have the best interest of workers at heart.

“It’s important to get involved in the political process to build connections and relationships with current and up-and-



Above: PROTEC17 members and staff with Rep. Jeanne Kohl-Welles. Below: PROTEC17 members and staff with Spokane Mayoral candidate Ben Stuckart.



**“We need to know who is friendly to Labor and unions, and who will support workers and the communities in which we live, work, and serve.”**

Cindy Watanabe-Mezs  
PROTEC17 Secretary/Treasurer  
*King County*

coming political leaders,” said King County member and PROTEC17 Secretary/Treasurer Cindy Watanabe-Mezs, pictured next to Jeanne Kohl-Welles above. “We need to know who is friendly to Labor and unions, and who will support workers and the communities in which we live, work and serve.”

You can find our list of early endorsements at the end of this article. Remember: your union dues money is never used to endorse candidates – only voluntary contributions to the political action committee (PAC) are used for this purpose.

Another part of our new political program is a pilot training that is being held on Aug. 29. In this training, members will learn how to define the impact of politics at work and beyond, develop strategies to encourage co-workers to become politically active, and identify activities on all ends of the engagement process that build union power. There will be other opportunities to participate in the near future if you weren’t able to sign up for this one. ■

**PROTEC17  
Early  
Endorsements:**

**Kent City Council, Position 5:**  
Mizan Rahman

**King County Council, District 2:**  
Larry Gossett

**King County Council, District 4:**  
Jeanne Kohl-Welles

**Seattle City Council, Position 2:**  
Mark Solomon

**Spokane Mayor:**  
Ben Stuckart

**Tacoma City Council:**  
Nathe Lawver

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

# Oregon PERS Update

## Cuts to PERS during the 2019 Oregon legislative session spur impact contract bargaining, legal challenges and ballot initiatives

**A**s the retirement cuts contained in the controversial Senate Bill (SB 1049) that passed in the Oregon legislature this spring begin to roll out, there will be significant discussions about how they will impact public employers and employees across the state.

PROTEC17 and other unions at the City of Portland will be entering into negotiations with the City shortly to discuss the ramifications of changes to the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) that are set to begin in July of 2020. Specifically, we will be addressing the Individual Account Program (IAP) redirect, which will be 2.5% for PERS 1 and 2 members, and 0.75% for Oregon Public Service Retirement Plan (OPSRP) members. We are focused on protecting as much of this benefit as we can for our members in order to both ensure retirement security and to keep the City of Portland an attractive place to work at all stages of a professional career.



Concurrently, there will be legal challenges to SB 1049, and PROTEC17 is working with the Oregon PERS Coalition as it explores these options. Legal action will likely be taking place in the coming months and arrive at the Oregon Supreme Court in the coming biennium.

Finally, while SB 1049 represented the biggest PERS cut in years, opponents of public employees will continue to attempt to strip members of remaining benefits, as seen in the initial filings of four initiative petitions for the 2020 ballot. These petitions seek to establish a 401k style defined contribution PERS tier, require direct employee contributions to the IAP or similar account, and further reduce the final average salary limit for benefits. PROTEC17 will track these initiatives closely through our work with the PERS Coalition, and we will notify members on ways that they can fight back against retirement cuts. ■