



There is no economic justice without racial justice.



On the Cover:

PROTEC17 stands in solidarity with our Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities to demand racial justice and an end to police brutality. Members throughout the Pacific Northwest have taken part in peaceful protests from Seattle to Spokane and from Bellingham to Portland. ■

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Celebrating our LGBTQ+ members

PROTEC17 celebrates our LGBTQ+ members, and honors the diversity you bring to our union. We also celebrate a major victory at the U.S. Supreme Court on June 15 that confirms current civil rights laws protect LGBTQ+ workers.

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There is no economic justice without racial justice

By Karen Estevenin, PROTEC17 Executive Director



We are in the middle of a pandemic and the beginning of a deep recession. At the same time, streets across our country are erupting in the wake of George Floyd's murder. The stark cover of this issue of *Insight* magazine reflects the tenor of this moment: anguish, outrage, and clarity. Economic justice does not exist without racial justice. This is nothing new. We are entrenched in over 400 years of systemic racism. Also, in this moment is an undercurrent of hope and possibility – but we must take action now.

PROTEC17 stands ready to meet this moment – united hand-in-hand with the many Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) members and leaders who have led us here – to demand racial and economic justice, and a world in which we can all be safe and healthy. It is my commitment that PROTEC17 will not be complicit in perpetuating systemic racism. We will move forward with actions and sustainable change through the work we do and the power we have as an organization.

Recently, PROTEC17's delegates to the Martin Luther King County Labor Council unanimously voted along with Council majority to expel the Seattle Police Officers Guild (SPOG) from the Council. This was not an easy decision. But challenge and discomfort force change – we know this well in the labor movement.

We continue to support our members in the Seattle Police Department and at the Washington State Patrol, as well as other public safety workers who provide essential services to our community. We continue to believe that police officers, like all workers, deserve the benefits of a union. And when the Guild commits to pursuing racial justice, we will be there as partners.

Unions, including PROTEC17, need to take direction from our BIPOC members and community leaders who have carried the weight of racism for far too long. We also need to engage in a dialogue about what a fair, equitable and thriving community looks like and feels like. We need to move these discussions to action – something I will be doing along with labor partners, employers, and community groups in the weeks, months, and years to come.

Internally, PROTEC17 adopted as a three-year strategic planning priority to elevate race and justice initiatives last year. We have started this work through staff and member training and are now examining many of our processes through a lens of racial justice including negotiations, grievances, and member-leader training and recruitment, among others. We also plan to target structures at our workplaces that perpetuate racism within areas like hiring, layoffs, promotions, and employee development. And we are developing a related hub of resources, information and opportunities that will be an ongoing part of our website.

Until we change as a union – intrinsically linking racial and economic justice – we are giving up power. We are fighting for wages, benefits, dignity, and respect in a racist system that divides and harms us, especially our BIPOC siblings. Until we can unite in true solidarity and rid our own processes and workplaces of even the residues of racism, we will always be leaving something on the table.

We will know when racial and economic justice flourish in our workplaces because we will all thrive there holding equal power, truth and solidarity. Getting to this point will be a challenging journey, but a vital one. If you're moved to action – and I hope you are – I invite you to reach out to your co-workers, your friends and your union as we move forward together.

PROTEC17 unequivocally supports fairness, equity, and opportunity for all working people. Black Lives Matter. My hope is that in time we will no longer need to say this because it will ring true in all of our hearts, workplaces, and communities.

With hope, gratitude, and determination,

Meet new Executive Board Trustee Renee Thompson



PROTEC17 member Renee Thompson was appointed to the Executive Board in early June to fill a vacancy left by Trustee Mary Davis.

Thompson is an Engineering Tech IV with the City of Tacoma, where she's worked since 1996, providing support to engineers and managing smaller electrical projects.

Born into a union household, Thompson is passionate about working for the greater good. As a nearly 25-year PROTEC17 member, she has served as a Steward and on the contract negotiations team. On the Executive Board, she is committed to making sure that all members feel heard and empowered to take action to make their workplaces and their lives better.

Thompson is also a member and officer for the Toastmaster organization and is in training to become a facilitator for equity classes at the City of Tacoma. She is the proud mom of two grown children and enjoys spending time with her friends and family (which includes several cats, dogs and a bunny). Thompson also loves the outdoors and can't wait to go out on a much-needed camping trip. ■

Electronic vote on changes to the PROTEC17 constitution this summer

Over the last several months, the PROTEC17 constitution committee has continued their important work (virtually) to revise the governing document of our union. Started as a Regional Executive Committee (REC) project in 2019, the first revision – to allow for electronic balloting – was voted on and passed by the membership in early March.

The PROTEC17 constitution contains articles guiding the objectives, governance, membership, election procedures, policies, and more for our union. It is an instrumental document that sets the structure of our organization.

The constitution committee – consisting of REC delegates Marc Anderson (King County), Rachael Brooks (City of Seattle), Ulysses Hilliard (City of Seattle), Jake Jacobovitch (King County), Dan Santon (King County) and Sean Simmons (WSDOT) – is continuing to go through

the document line-by-line to ensure it's up-to-date and integrates and improves upon current technologies and processes.

The PROTEC17 constitution has not been heavily revised since 2011 when our members voted to disaffiliate from IFPTE, our international union. At that time, the constitutional language was cleaned up to reflect changes to our name (PTE17) and new independent status. In 2020, the committee will also be updating the language to reflect our 2019 rebranding to PROTEC17.

The next round of proposed revisions will go to members this summer for a vote – this time via electronic ballot – likely at the beginning of August, barring any COVID-19 related delays. Members should expect to receive more information about constitutional changes via their personal email. If you need to update your contact information to ensure you receive a ballot, please email union@protec17.org. ■

PROTEC17 scholarship deadline is July 31!

PROTEC17 is again offering two \$3,000 college scholarships this year to depen-

dents of members. One scholarship is geared towards students who will be incoming college freshmen in the fall, and the other is for students who are continuing their education beyond freshmen year.

The application is available on the PROTEC17 website (www.protec17.org/benefits). In it, applicants are asked to demonstrate their academic achievement, community service, extracurricular activities, and educational goals. They are also asked to write a labor-related essay which is reviewed by outside labor educators. The deadline to apply is July 31, 2020.



Since the program's inception in 2011, PROTEC17 has awarded 15 scholarships for a total of \$45,000 towards further education for our members' children.

In their essays, past winners have highlighted how their parent's involvement with PROTEC17 has taught them the value of working together to solve problems, as well as the importance of unions and the broader worker community.

If you are the parent, grandparent or legal guardian of a child heading off or returning to college, please encourage them to apply. If you have any questions about the scholarship program, contact Communications Director Deidre Girard at deidre@protec17.org or 206-328-7321 ext. 130. ■

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

State negotiations begin virtually

COVID-19 to impact negotiations, both technologically and economically



n May 20, the PROTEC17 State negotiating team held its first session on the 2021-2023 contract with

management from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Department of Licensing (DOL), and the Washington State Patrol (WSP), as well as the Governor's Office of Financial Management (OFM).

In these unprecedented times of working during a global pandemic, negotiations were held via teleconference software in order to keep safe and in compliance with the Governor's orders to social distance while the coronavirus continues to pose a public health threat.

The PROTEC17 team consists of members Bonnie Caress (DOL), Russ Hallgren (WSP), Chanel Johnson (DOL), Daniel Jones (WSDOT), John Kleinkopf (WSDOT), Mindi Mezek (WSP), Steve Morgans (WSDOT) and Faith Shuler (WSDOT), plus alternate Christina Belt (WSP), Bill Tufts, a WSP subject matter expert, and PROTEC17 staff Sarah Lorenzini and Alexis Young.

The team presented its first set of proposals to OFM, including economic and non-economic items such as: posting of minimum job requirements; Licensing Service Representative (LSR) transfers; performance evaluations; compensatory time maximum; paid time for union and professional training; parity for Tuesday through Saturday LSRs; clarification on positions needing "relief replacement" and inclement weather; union access to new employees; assignment pay for those working around asbestos; and the extension of an MOU specific to WSDOT engineers.

All proposals are made in consultation with the entire PROTEC17 negotiating team, as well as the survey input received from state members earlier this year about what they want to see in the next contract.



The PROTEC17 state negotiations team (above) met with management via Zoom teleconferencing during their first session on May 20.

A Washington State statute obligates contract negotiations to be completed by October 1, 2020, in time for inclusion in the Governor's budget proposal. But in light of the unprecedented circumstances due to COVID-19, the actual timeline may change. Regardless, the PROTEC17 team is committed to making as many improvements as possible – both economic and non-economic – for members.

As for negotiating via video teleconference, team member Faith Shuler, who is an Engineering Technician III at WSDOT, said: "I was initially skeptical that negotiating over Zoom would be awkward and unproductive. On the contrary – not only has it been productive, but a lot more efficient, saving the State and the Union time and resources. I don't see it completely replacing in-person negotiations, but we're making it work in order to keep everyone safe and healthy during the pandemic."

The team met again on June 10 and the State presented their initial proposals, which included some responses to PROTEC17's initial set of proposals. In addition, the union team proposed additional contract changes, including the extension of a WSP Memorandum of Understanding (MOU); changes to overtime rules;

additional time between shifts for WSP employees; clarification regarding temporary schedule-change notice, tandem WSP employees' seniority, and break rules; and additional miscellaneous leave.

The next session is slated to take place June 24. At that time, the PROTEC17 team expects to have a better picture of the State's economic outlook for the next biennium.

Meanwhile, PROTEC17 continues to work with other unions and community partners to strategize around negotiating economics – like wage and cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) – in light of what may be a large hole in the State budget due to lost revenue related to the pandemic. Thank you to all of the members who filled out our recent second survey to give the team additional input around negotiating potential COVID-19 related budget impacts.

As things continue to evolve and change on a daily basis, PROTEC17 will keep state members updated on new developments. Please reach out to a member of the bargaining team, your Steward, or your Union Representative if you have any questions about negotiations. ■

Standing for justice:

New PROTEC17 members call for change to economic, racial and social injustices within and outside of their work

As one of PROTEC17's newest member groups, the Senior Civil Rights Analysts in the Office of Labor Standards (OLS) at the City of Seattle are tackling some of today's most pressing societal concerns – both on and off the job.

The OLS is responsible for enforcing the City's labor laws and policies. They do this by investigating city businesses to ensure that they are in compliance with various ordinances, such as the minimum wage and paid sick leave. If businesses are found to be in violation, the OLS helps them get in compliance, as well as gets employees compensated for any violation of their rights. In its five year existence, the OLS has recouped \$6 million dollars for workers in Seattle.

Sarah Leyrer, new PROTEC17 member and Senior Labor Standards Investigator (the working title for the Senior Civil Rights Analysts classification in OLS) has worked in the OLS since its formation. She came to the City of Seattle after working

“This is part of how we can build a robust labor movement that has immense power to actively shape a future where race, gender, sexual orientation/identity doesn't determine life outcomes.”

Sundar Sharma, PROTEC17 member and Senior Labor Standards Investigator, *City of Seattle*

on wage theft issues in law school with the community group CASA Latina. She believes the OLS is an innovative approach to advancing workers rights, immigrant rights, and race and social justice issues.

Fellow Investigator and PROTEC17 member Sundar Sharma became interested in the intersection of race and social justice issues and public policy in high school when he got active in Barack Obama's first presidential campaign. Since then, he's worked on issues ranging from stopping South and Southeast Asian sweatshops, to pushing for the \$15 minimum wage in Minneapolis, to campaigning against police violence. After attending graduate school for public policy, he started at the OLS three years ago.

Both Leyrer and Sharma were also integral in getting their colleagues organized into the union when the OLS became a division of the Office of Civil Rights, where PROTEC17 already had members in the Civil Rights Analyst classification.

“We felt like we wanted to join with our colleagues in PROTEC17 so that we could advance our shared interests through the union, win enhanced job protection, and organize more broadly with other city workers,” said Leyrer.

After voting to join PROTEC17 earlier this year, the new member group was certified in May 2020 by the Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC) – the oversight body that verifies union elections. Next, they will negotiate the terms of their contract.

“It feels like a great time to be part of a union,” said Sharma, who noted the timing of the pandemic and the extra economic security that comes with being a union when times are uncertain, as well as the swelling national movement for racial justice.

“It has been great to be able to organize as workers to fight alongside and

as part of our respective communities for concrete changes in the City's priorities around policing and austerity – both of which have disproportionate impacts on the communities of color that we serve as public sector workers,” Sharma said.

Leyrer and Sharma are very interested in advancing racial justice issues within PROTEC17 by ensuring that every strategy, policy, hiring, and negotiating decision that is made considers the impact to Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) both within and outside of the union.

“I think we need to be thinking actively about how we can create unions that workers of color trust to stand up for them, both inside and outside of the workplace,” said Sharma. “This is part of how we can build a robust labor movement that has immense power to actively shape a future where race, gender, sexual orientation/identity, etc. doesn't determine life outcomes.”

As part of the movement, Sharma and Leyrer have been actively participating alongside many PROTEC17 and other union members in the peaceful protests in Seattle, including the May 30 rally at Westlake Park and the June 12 silent march organized by Black Lives Matter Seattle-King County.

“This was the first time many of us had gathered in concrete organized action outside the office, which contributed to an overall mood that labor cannot sit on the sidelines during this enormously important upheaval,” said Sharma of his experience at these events.

“The pandemic is providing the opportunity to see our world and the systems we have built with fresh eyes,” said Leyrer. “I am glad to be part of an organization that I hope will choose to fight for radical, transformational justice.” ■

Photo at right: PROTEC17 staff and members, including Sundar Sharma (in blue), at the rally at Westlake on May 30.



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COVID-19 spikes in Eastern Washington:

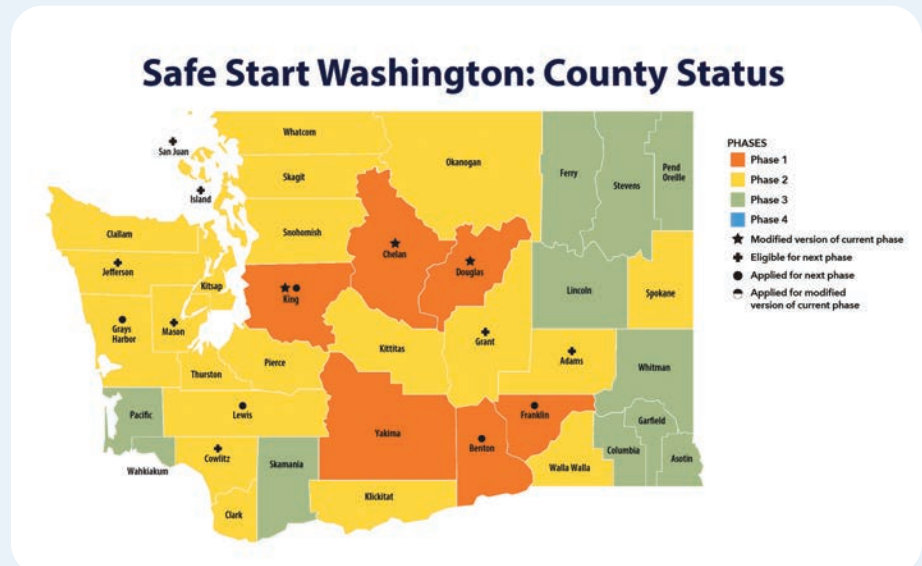
PROTEC17 Health District members working on the front lines

As some counties in Washington begin to slowly reopen following the state-mandated closures to keep the coronavirus from spreading, Eastern Washington has seen a spike in cases of COVID-19, the potentially deadly disease that results from the respiratory virus. Meanwhile, PROTEC17 members at Public Health Districts in Yakima, Chelan-Douglas, Benton-Franklin, and Spokane have been working to keep the virus at bay.

Per Governor Jay Inslee's phased reopening plan, cases of the virus need to be below 25 per 100,000 people over a two week period before a County can be considered for 'Phase 2', which allows businesses like restaurants and retail stores to open at partial capacity. As of mid-June, Yakima, Benton, Franklin, Chelan, Douglas and King Counties all remained in phase one, or a modified phase one.

In the Tri-Cities area, the infection rate hit a new daily record of 83 confirmed COVID-19 cases on June 8. At that time, Benton County's infection rate was more than 500 cases per 100,000 over a 14-day period – well above the number to be considered for the Governor's Phase 2 status.

Benton-Franklin Health District (BFHD) officials have attributed the increased cases of COVID-19 to outbreaks at nursing homes, essential workplaces,



Under Gov. Inslee's 'Safe Start Washington' plan, Counties need to meet certain requirements before being considered for the next phase of reopening. This map is the status counties as of June 16.

and large gatherings. A beef processing plant in the Pasco area had been a hot spot previously, and was under intense scrutiny for its initial lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) for its workers.

Along with the Governor, BFHD issued a directive on June 8 to require protective masks in public where people cannot maintain a safe six feet of distance from others. Wearing a mask has been shown to slow the spread of the disease.

In Yakima County, the coronavirus is still ravaging the agricultural worker community. State rules put in place on June 4 require masks for these workers, however, health district officials have attributed the recent uptick in cases to gatherings outside of the workplace, where masks are not required or widely worn at stores and in the community.

In Spokane, which has progressed to Phase 2, PROTEC17 member Kayla Myers was reassigned from her regular role as an Immunization Assessment and Promotion Coordinator to co-leader of the community-based screening and testing site at the

Spokane County Fairgrounds. She's been doing this since the start of the pandemic.

"The initial effort was to preserve the urgent care and PPE usage," she said. "When our healthcare partners were pulled back into their clinics at the peak, we collaborated with the National Guard to continue offering free drive-thru testing to ensure that the public had access to tests with limited barriers, and at no cost."

With cases in Spokane slowly improving, Myers has been looped back into a mix of regular work and COVID-19 response.

At Chelan-Douglas Health District (CDHD), all staff have been tasked with providing assistance with COVID-19 response since March. They will slowly be phasing back into their regular routines as the two counties start to reopen.

"We will have to find a new way to do things as our counties reopen and staff will have to go back to their usual duties – inspecting restaurants, onsite inspections, etc," said PROTEC17 CDHD Chapter President and Nurse Stephanie Snitily. ■



For COVID-19 FAQs and Resources, visit: protec17.org/covid19

Language Access Team assembled to translate important COVID-19 information for non-English speaking communities



When it became clear that COVID-19 was going to be a major threat to public health back in early March 2020,

leaders in hard-hit King County knew that it would be critical to get accurate information out quickly to the community. Soon after, employees from across County departments came together to form the Language Access Team – an effort to translate and disseminate important health information in multiple languages to reach as many community members as possible.

“Language Access is about operationalizing equity,” said Senayet Negusse, the Language Equity Program Manager, who started at King County on March 17 at the beginning of the pandemic.

“It is our job as a local government entity to be inclusive and responsive to the needs of the community,” she continued.

While many of the nine members of the Language Access Team – which includes six PROTEC17 members – speak multiple languages themselves, their main role is to build and grow relationships with community leaders who in

turn provide high quality translations that will resonate within their community. Leaders also provide invaluable input on the changing needs of their communities so that the Team can make continuous improvements to their processes and systems. So far, COVID-19 resources have been translated into 33 languages.

“Multilingual resources are important for the same reason that resources in English are important: all people need access to information,” said PROTEC17 member Francesca Collins, who works for Seattle-King County Public Health (SKCPH) as an Educator Consultant.

Collins, along with fellow SKCPH Educator Kari Kesler, joined the team bringing their skills and knowledge as public health practitioners, as well as their equity and social justice lenses.

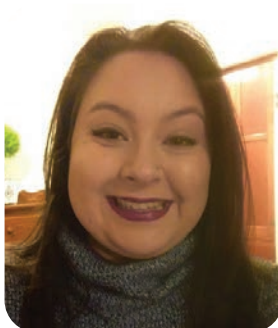
As a long-time community advocate and activist, Amanda Kay, PROTEC17 member and Administrative Specialist III, jumped at the opportunity to join the team. She lends her expertise in systems development to streamline the flood of work that needs to get done.

PROTEC17 member Andrea Gerber, who has been a Health Educator in the SKCPH Family Planning program for over 25 years, volunteered for the Team because she heard that people were working around the clock to translate COVID-19 information and wanted to lend a hand.

“Everyone should be able to receive information from their local government – in the languages that they speak, and in a manner that is clear and relevant – about how to avoid COVID-19, get care for themselves or their loved ones, and access resources,” said Gerber.

“If we do not deliver this information in a linguistically and culturally appropriate way to all communities, many residents will be excluded from the ability to protect themselves and loved ones,” added PROTEC17 member Marlee Fischer, a Project/Program Manager with the County’s Emergency Medical Services.

Thanks to the team, which also includes Carmaleta Aguilar (PROTEC17), Crystal Jones, and Peggy Liao, King County communities have been better able to stay informed during the pandemic. ■



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Andrea Gerber, PROTEC17 Member and Health Educator, *Seattle-King County Public Health*

Language Access Team members: Senayet Negusse, Andrea Gerber (PROTEC17), Crystal Jones, Marlee Fischer (PROTEC17), Francesca Collins (PROTEC17) and Amanda Kay (PROTEC17).

GALLERY



Protecting public employee privacy in Washington State

In response to concerns about public employee privacy and with the support of PROTEC17, the Washington State legislature passed House Bill (HB) 1888 in March, which protects certain public employee information in public disclosure requests (PDRs).

The bill went into effect on June 11, 2020 and exempts the month and year of birth dates of government employees from public disclosure laws. These exemptions had previously been provided only for criminal justice employees, but now will be extended to all public employees.

This is an important step forward in protecting our members' privacy because dates of birth can be used to align names



with other databases, such as voter records, opening up the potential for fraudulence or harassment.

Anti-union groups like the Freedom Foundation/

Opt-out Today regularly submit PDRs in order to send union members confusing misinformation. This group submitted several mass requests for public employee data in May and early June before the law took effect. Prior to June 11, PROTEC17 was able to exempt members with safety concerns, such as domestic violence and restraining orders, from the PDR lists.

Efforts continue in Oregon to shield public employee personal information from public disclosure. PROTEC17 will remain involved in these efforts in both Oregon and Washington. ■

PROTEC17 gears up for endorsement season



This summer, PROTEC17 will begin interviewing candidates in key local races across Washington and Oregon as part of our growing member-engaged political program.

The program, which was piloted last year, includes training on why our involvement in politics is important, and mobilizes member committees across Washington and Oregon to interview political candidates about their stance on worker's issues. This year, PROTEC17 plans to hire a part-time Political Action Coordinator to lead the program.

As public employees, PROTEC17 members are directly impacted by the decisions that politicians make regarding government funding and policy changes. The interview committees ask the tough questions to ensure that candidates have members' best interests in mind.

More information on the Political Action Program will be forthcoming. If you would like to participate, please contact your Union Representative. ■

Portland Primary Election Results

Following the twist ending of a quarantine campaign to wrap up one of the most contested elections in Portland history, there were some expected results, some surprising results, and several significant runoffs in the May 19 primary.

City Council Position 1, currently held by retiring Commissioner Amanda Fritz, was won by Carmen Rubio. PROTEC17 endorsed Rubio, and looks forward to working with her in her new role.

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly and Mingus Mapps will have runoff election in November, as will Mayor Ted Wheeler and Sarah Iannarone, after neither incumbent secured a majority of the vote in May. PROTEC17 endorsed Commissioner Eudaly and we plan to continue this support in the general election.

The crowded race to fill the remainder of the 2018-2022 term for Council Position 2, previously held by

the late Commissioner Fish, resulted in a runoff between Lorretta Smith and Dan Ryan. This runoff will take place in a special August 11 election. The member-led PROTEC17 Portland endorsement committee is considering options for endorsing in this race and will communicate any such decision as soon as possible.

Finally, in a significant victory for transportation funding, Portland voters approved the continuation of the Fixing Our Streets funding package by a wide margin of over 77 percent. This measure, which was supported by PROTEC17, will continue the 10 cent per gallon gas tax originally passed by voters in 2016 and provide an additional \$74.5 million in critical transportation safety and maintenance funding.

For more information, please contact PROTEC17 Research Director and Oregon Legislative Advocate Elliot Levin at elliott@protec17.org. ■

Learn more at: www.protec17.org/government-affairs

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