

insight

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS

OF PROTEC17

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On the Cover:

PROTEC17 at the 'Count Every Vote' Rally in downtown Seattle on Nov. 5. At their October meeting, PROTEC17 Regional Executive Committee (REC) members passed a resolution to be an active part of preserving democracy after a contentious and divisive election season. Read more on pages 6 and 11. ■

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Karen Estevenin
Executive Director

Resilience and creating joyful noise

This year has seen the once implausible become normal – a still-widening pandemic that continues to spike and transition our entire lives, nationwide protests for racial justice, our forests burning, the loss of great champions for justice in John Lewis and Ruth Bader Ginsberg, and an election that provoked bloodshed. 2021 can't come soon enough.

Our losses this year weigh on us as individuals and communities. We are grieving our old routines, our disconnection from our friends and colleagues, and the loss of loved ones. In reflecting on all this, I have found myself wondering and asking others: *how, then, did we get through this year?*

Seeking joy is a common thread I have recognized among many responses to this question. Joy brings resilience in the face of adversity. It binds us together, creating a fabric that we have all had a hand in weaving. Through this work, we learn from each other, lean-in together, and become stronger. This year has made us find new ways to connect, like our Probation Counselors who mobilized letter writing, petitions, and actions (p. 8) to not only fight for their jobs, but their communities and clients who will be impacted by cuts to crucial Court programs and resources. It has encouraged us to rise up against racism and to do so through all opportunities, as Dahvee Enciso demonstrates through his contributions to preserving important Black Lives Matter artwork (p. 7). It has compelled us to create new methods of organizing, as our Young Members of PROTEC17 did in order to host a virtual 'Get Out The Vote' ballot party this fall (p. 10).

Ultimately, this year has raised fundamental questions about the depth of our commitments to each other and the greater good. And we've answered a resounding YES! We got through this year by mobilizing to protect each other, to correct injustice, and to build our union. We are creating joyful noise.

This year, PROTEC17 members saved hundreds of jobs at the City of Seattle through active engagement in the budget process. Spokane Regional Health District members mobilized around a righteous fight for public health (p. 9). Whatcom County members triumphantly stopped a bargaining ordinance straight out of the playbook of the anti-union, 'anti-freedom' Freedom Foundation. King County members won historic child care benefits. City of Portland members navigated the City's fiscal mess, greatly easing the impacts on members. And there were many more successes this year in bargaining around the impacts of COVID-19, telework, and budget shortfalls. We have improved every agreement we've been party to by leveraging our collective power.

It can be hard to celebrate such moments when so much still looks bleak and there's even more to do. But that is part of what this season is for – to reflect on what we've accomplished. And what we've accomplished is tremendous. So let us also reflect on the joy of that. Joy is resilience. It is radical. And it will get us through more tough times ahead.

Thank you for all you do for our communities and our union. I wish you a wonderful holiday season and look forward to making joyful trouble with you in 2021.

In compassion and solidarity,

PROTEC17 gear now available for purchase in our new swag store!



PROTEC17 is excited to announce the unveiling of our brand new online swag store!

For years, members have been asking how they can purchase merchandise with our logo on it to proudly show their union colors, and now you can!

Over the last several months, our staff has been working with Ethix Merch, a company specializing in union and USA-made, ethically-sourced products to build the webstore at: <https://protec17.myshopify.com>. There are t-shirts, hoodies, beanies, water bottles, and more, available to members at-cost - PROTEC17 will make no profit on your purchases. And right now, you can get a free face mask or magnetic bumper sticker with your first purchase!

In 2021, we will keep an eye on which products are most popular, and will survey members to find out what other items they'd like to see. Enjoy! ■

PROTEC17 donated more than 25K in 2020

In 2020, PROTEC17 contributed more than \$25k to organizations supporting union and community members in need.

Because of the pandemic, the wildfires in September, and calls for racial justice throughout the summer and beyond, PROTEC17 donated more financial assistance than ever before, and in December, we continued our tradition of donating to food banks throughout the Pacific Northwest. We are proud to be able to support so many important causes. ■

Members vote 'YES' on two more amendments to the PROTEC17 constitution

Members approved two additional amendments to the PROTEC17 Constitution after votes were tallied on Dec. 10.

Revisions to the guiding document for our union began in 2019 when the Regional Executive Committee (REC) – the governing body of PROTEC17 – approved forming a committee to make many needed updates. From housekeeping items, like the reference to our new name 'PROTEC17' (formerly PTE17), to policy revisions, it has been important to ensure this document is up-to-date and reflects best practices for union governance.

The first revision was voted on in March, approving the use of electronic

ballots for voting, which saves PROTEC17 a substantial amount of money on the printing and mailing of paper ballots.

Over the summer, Amendments 2 and 3 were approved, containing housekeeping elements and another revision which firmed up the policy for designating alternates to the REC.

Now Amendments 4 and 5 have been approved. Amendment 4 establishes a process to remove the Executive Director or an Executive Board member for misconduct, and Amendment 5 changes the designation of Board seats to ensure more balanced representation.

The committee will continue to bring additional changes to members in 2021. ■

Meet PROTEC17's new Union Representative for King County members

In October, PROTEC17 welcomed our newest staff member, Youssef El Hamawi. He will be representing members at King County (KC), joining fellow KC Union Representatives Denise Cobden and Alex Il.



El Hamawi spent his early career doing humanitarian work and then joined the labor movement, working most recently for SEIU Healthcare in Minnesota. He will be working with KC members in: DNRP/ DDES/DOT Permitting, Managers, Public Health EMS, Public Health Environmental Health Senior Professionals, Public Health Involuntary Commitment Professionals, Public Health Professional & Technical, Superior Court, and Transit Professional & Technical units.

"I am proud and honored to be a part of PROTEC17," said El Hamawi. "This union shares the same values as me and cares about working people. This is my union now, and I am ready to protect our members and the work they do in the public sector."

While El Hamawi started under unusual circumstances – meeting his fellow staff and members virtually via video conference – he has already hit the ground running, participating in actions, surveying members about their needs, and advocating on their behalf.

In his spare time, El Hamawi likes to travel, cook, listen to music, and spend time with his friends and family (when it's safe to do so!), including with his twin brother who also lives in Seattle. ■

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

State members ratify 2021-2023 contract

The PROTEC17 State negotiations team reached a Tentative Agreement (TA) with the State of Washington for the 2021-2023 state contract on Sept 24. After an electronic ballot vote, the TA was ratified by members on Sept. 30, in time for inclusion in Governor Jay Inslee's budget and the Oct. 1 deadline.

The contract, which covers our members at the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), The Department of Licensing (DOL), and the Washington State Patrol (WSP), was negotiated virtually via video conference.

With the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting multi-billion dollar state budget shortfall, this was not the ideal economy in which to negotiate a contract. However, PROTEC17 staff surveyed State members again in the spring to assess the changing priorities given the new situation. The negotiating team was successful in delivering on these priorities.

One of the main priorities for members was maintaining the cost-share for healthcare benefits at the 85/15 split for the 2021-2023 biennium. In these uncertain times, our State members can all rest a little easier knowing they can get the healthcare they need.

Next, the State team discussed other economic and non-economic priorities. Instead of proposing a full rollover of the contract, the team took the opportunity to make some positive changes to contract language, including: streamlining of the WSP transfer process; protecting performance evaluations from allegations proven to be false; additional time between shifts for WSP members; additional training time for union stewards; expansion of LSR vacation opportunities; and the extension of an MOU providing an incentive for WSDOT employees to get their PE license.

Recognizing the need for tremendous budget savings, the team tried to be creative by proposing contract changes that would boost morale but cost the state little



or nothing. The state, unfortunately, was unreceptive to these innovative proposals such as: casual attire for WSP Communication Officers (COs), and Saturday furloughs for Licensing Service Representatives (LSRs) so they could get a three-day weekend were rejected with seemingly little consideration.

As a result, the negotiating team offered the TA to their fellow State members without a recommendation, but with assurance that they got the best contract possible in a time of unprecedented uncertainty.

“Most of us walked into this session hoping for bigger progress for our members, but I feel we did well given the unique health and financial crisis we are currently facing,” said Anthony Madsen, bargaining team member and Pro-Rate and Fuel Tax Auditor at the DOL.

By being in a union, our State members were guaranteed their three-percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on July 1, 2020, and through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) reached with the State this summer, PROTEC17 members were able to participate in the WorkShare program which – in conjunction with a funding boost from the CARES ACT passed by Congress – put an extra \$600 in members’ pockets for four weeks in exchange for weekly furloughs.

Lastly, the negotiating team was able to stave off the State’s proposal to freeze Periodic Increment Dates for the life of the 2021-23 contract. But State employees knew sacrifices would be needed to reconcile the State’s budget through the next biennium. As a result, PROTEC17 State members will not receive a COLA

during the 2021-23 biennium. Furthermore, the State team agreed to take one furlough day per month through the biennium, with an opportunity to negotiate a reduction in – or elimination of – those furloughs prior to implementation in July 2021 by the request of either party.

Despite these temporary cuts, it’s more important than ever to be a union member. PROTEC17 State members secured their July 2020 COLA, while many non-represented employees did not. And, by having a union, the State team was able to negotiate the economic impacts of this pandemic on their terms.

In January, PROTEC17 members and staff will be virtually lobbying state legislators for more progressive tax measures to help mitigate budget impacts and boost the economy. Washington State has the most regressive tax structure in the country, meaning those who make the least, pay the largest percentage of their income in taxes. But we have the power to change that, and PROTEC17 members intend to do just that next session, as those changes could help fuel new revenue to mitigate furloughs.

If you’d like to share your work and experience as a state employee and union member with your legislator, please reach out to your Union Representative. ■

“Most of us walked into this session hoping for bigger progress for our members, but I feel we did well given the unique health and financial crisis we are currently facing.”

Anthony Madsen, PROTEC17 bargaining team member, *Washington State Department of Licensing*

Regional Executive Committee (REC) meets, approves constitutional amendments, honors Tacoma member



On Oct. 17, the PROTEC17 Regional Executive Committee (REC), our policy making body, convened via video

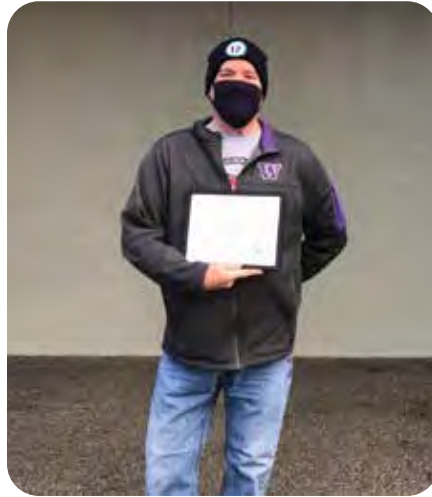
conference to conduct union business. The REC meets twice per year – usually in-person in Tukwila in March and October – but due to the pandemic, this was the second meeting in 2020 that was conducted virtually.

The meeting opened with a welcome and tribal land acknowledgement by PROTEC17 President Rachael Brooks and then delegates were able to introduce themselves to each other in small virtual breakout rooms. After returning to the session, delegates motioned to approve the minutes from the March meeting, and then heard a ‘state-of-the-union’ update from Executive Director Karen Estevenin.

“This has been an unprecedented year for our union,” said Estevenin. “Staff and leaders have been working hard to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic, while members have been more active than ever around issues of racial justice, political action, and keeping our union strong.”

PROTEC17 Secretary/Treasurer Jessica Garcia then introduced the budget and reviewed line items that had changed based on projections early in the year before the start of the pandemic. Delegates were able to get their questions answered and will bring that information to the March meeting when the 2021 budget is presented to the REC.

The Constitution Committee – introduced by committee member Dan Stanton – talked about their progress on revising PROTEC17’s governing document, and brought two amendments to the floor for approval before sending them to the entire membership for a vote. Delegates discussed and debated the amendments,



PROTEC17 member and REC delegate Shane Stull stands with his certificate for excellence in union organizing.

before motioning to approve the vote. As you can read in more detail on page 4, the two amendments – one adding language on the process of removing the Executive Director or an Executive Board member for misconduct, and the other redefining the designation of Board seats – were passed by the membership on Dec. 10.

Director Estevenin then discussed our revamped political program and growing member involvement, which included dozens of members who participated in 60 endorsement interviews this year. She turned it over to PROTEC17 Operations Director and Election Chair Anthony Davidson, who recapped that the 2020 Board election was uncontested, therefore Vice President Sean Simmons and Trustee Renee Thompson would begin their next three-year term in 2021.

At the October 2019 REC meeting, delegates worked on an exercise to help define our organization’s mission statement. Similarly, at this fall’s meeting, members were able to talk about where they see our organization going in the next 10-20 years, and gathered ideas for a vision statement that will be crafted in 2021.

PROTEC17 Communications Director Deidre Girard gave an overview of the busy year for union communications, and updated delegates on upcoming projects that will implement more communication tools and member benefits. Some of these include adding discussion board functionality to the secure members-only portal, as well as the launch of an online store for PROTEC17 merchandise (more on p. 4).

At this meeting, the REC also honored long-time member-leader Shane Stull, who works for the City of Tacoma, for his immense efforts to help the Power Engineers organize into PROTEC17. Stull devoted many hours of personal time to answer the questions of these prospective members and to paint a picture of what being in PROTEC17 is all about.

“The reputation Shane has built over the years as an honest and steadfast worker advocate is the very reason PROTEC17 was approached by Tacoma Power Engineers in the first place,” said Union Representative Brent Wagar who worked with Stull and PROTEC17 Organizer Xuan-Trang Tran-Thien on the campaign.

“Shane has stood up for our members at Tacoma Public Utilities for over twenty years as a Steward,” Wagar continued. “His proven leadership is widely known and admired throughout the Tacoma Public Utility building.”

The REC awarded Stull with a certificate and a PROTEC17 beanie for all of his hard work.

Finally, the meeting concluded with the ‘good of the order’ where member and REC guest Joel Vancil was invited to introduce and propose a resolution that committed PROTEC17 to be ready to mobilize to preserve democracy following the results of the November election. The REC adopted this resolution. ■

Visit our website for new resources and tools! protec17.org

SDOT member helps make Black Lives Matter street mural a permanent fixture on Capitol Hill

For PROTEC17 member Dahvee Enciso, helping make the Black Lives Matter street mural a permanent fixture at 10th Avenue and East Pine Street in Seattle was one of the most important projects of his career.

As a Senior Civil Engineer Specialist at the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) for the last 14 years, Enciso feels privileged to have been able to work on a lot of unique projects. His primary job is to review plans and oversee the installation of decorative markings throughout the city, currently which number more than 50. He also reviews plans for other signage and markings and helps with sealing and maintenance programs.

Over the summer, when activists for racial justice assembled in the Capitol Hill neighborhood and created a powerful mural, spanning a whole city block, in honor of the Black Lives Matter movement, SDOT thought it was important to preserve the art and the moment in history. But while SDOT had good intentions, Enciso first had to convince the artists in the VividMatterCollective – whose work was directly protesting the municipal institution and system that he works for – that the City of Seattle did not want to commercialize their art or dilute their strong message.

“After hearing the concerns of the Collective, I was able to share with them in a more personal way what the mural meant to me,” said Enciso.

“I told them that I felt this piece is bigger than all of us and it would be a shame to see it crumble and wash down the street, erasing the moment that marked the movement.”

After considering Enciso’s comments, the Collective agreed to partner with SDOT and the Office of Arts and Culture, and together, they came up with a plan to remove the mural that had been damaged with sealant, commission 15 artists to repaint the mural, and use the best preserva-



The beginning of the Black Lives Matter mural at 10th Avenue and East Pine Street on Capitol Hill.

tion techniques so that it could become a permanent landmark in Seattle.

Enciso was onsite from the beginning to the end of the project. He used his knowledge of street mural techniques – like hydroblasting and using traffic solvent that is engineered to bond to road surfaces – to help provide an optimal canvas for the artists to paint on. He also met with artists at the paint store to acquire all of the needed materials. In all, the artists used three coats of vibrant paint on top of the solvent.

Helping with this project was incredibly important to Enciso, who tries to live by the motto: *When it’s all said and done, will I have done more than I’ve said, or said more than I’ve done?* He is proud to have participated in this project in order to help give voice to all of those who have been disregarded, hurt, or killed because of the color or their skin.

“This piece symbolizes the passing of the torch from the old generation to the new generation who are shouting ‘enough is enough’ and demanding change. I want to be able to bring my grandkids here to

visit the site where the movement changed the world.”

Enciso’s family, including his wife, stepmother, and children, were onsite for the project, too. For more photos, visit: protec17.org/news. ■

“This piece symbolizes the passing of the torch from the old generation to the new generation who are shouting ‘enough is enough’ and demanding change. I want to be able to bring my grandkids here to visit the site where the movement changed the world.”

Dahvee Enciso, PROTEC17 member and Civil Engineer Specialist, *City of Seattle*

PROTEC17 Probation Counselors who support vulnerable populations speak out about program cuts

Probation Counselors at the Seattle Municipal Court dedicate their days to moving their clients away from the circumstances that landed them in court, towards a productive, healthy, and fulfilling life. They are case workers, connecting clients to crucial services such as housing, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, job resources, and much more. For these PROTEC17 members, it's a vocation more than a job.

Many of these jobs, and the good they do, are now at risk. Seattle's Municipal Court recently proposed cutting 25 percent of their Department's budget. These cuts would handicap the Probation Counselors, disturb their clients' path to rehabilitation, and harm the communities we all live in. To save this vital work, the Counselors have mobilized to reverse these cuts.

"We recognize that the criminal justice system needs changes, and we're all on board with those," said Levi Gonzalez, a Counselor whose position is on the chopping block. "None of us are working here because we're wanting to throw people in jail. I've never recommended jail as an option. The caseload is really huge and I'm concerned that losing staff will increase caseloads. I have 400 people right now."

"I fear if we're reduced in the number of probation counselors, that there won't be the time to give clients the quality of service that they need to help them remain out of the justice system."

Torrance Green, PROTEC17 member and Probation Counselor, *Seattle Municipal Court*



PROTEC17 Probation Counselors were interviewed by KIRO7 about their important work with vulnerable populations before the City of Seattle cut 25% of the budget for their office on Nov. 25.

The proposed cuts would eliminate decades of experience supervising and assisting clients struggling with mental health, substance abuse issues, and simply reintegrating into a productive, safe life. And, significantly, the cuts would fall on those with critical community ties and experience — the impacted employees are disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

Torrance Green, a 16-year veteran who is not slated to be laid off, highlighted these impacts.

"Because of these cuts, I am being moved out of mental health counseling where I've worked for many years," said Green. "I am the only person of color that is currently working in mental health and I think it helps me connect with clients when they see my face."

The Counselors have been mobilizing against the cuts since they received notice in September. Their goal is to raise awareness of the impacts of these cuts and convince the Court to reverse its decision to lay off employees. In addition to direct discussions with Court officials, the

Counselors organized a letter-writing campaign to the Presiding Judge, City Council members, and Mayor Durkan. They also spoke with KIRO 7 on Nov. 10 for a story that aired on Nov. 18. Unfortunately, their stories were surrounded by some fear-based and sensationalized elements, which the Counselors were trying to avoid.

The PROTEC17 Probation Counselors believe that restoring their positions should be understood as part of a necessary process of realigning the criminal justice system. This goal was at the forefront when the Martin Luther King Labor Council passed a resolution in opposition to these program cuts, and in support of transitioning "the entire municipal court system to align with the powerful call for a reimagined public safety system."

On Nov. 25, Seattle City Council disappointingly voted to maintain the 25 percent budget cuts at the Municipal Court. PROTEC17 members and staff continue to work to mitigate the impacts of these cuts to the Counselors and the communities they serve. ■

Spokane Regional Health members rally in support of health officer unfairly fired from the district

In late October, Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD) staff learned that Public Health Officer Dr. Bob Lutz had been abruptly fired from his job. The reason for the firing was not immediately made public, and many PROTEC17 members were outraged at the perceived political maneuver that removed a well-respected official from his position just as COVID-19 case numbers were skyrocketing in the community. The Health Officer position is pivotal to making key decisions at SRHD – especially in times of crisis.

Lutz had been a well-respected figure in the community and was the face of the public health response to the pandemic. He had a reputation for speaking up for underserved communities, making tough decisions when the data supported it, and acting as a facilitator for local community groups to collaborate. Many members who had worked with Lutz for years were galvanized to take action.

Three rallies were held in the span of a week to show support for Dr. Lutz. Hun-

dreds of community members gathered in masks, and abided by social-distancing protocols, to let SRHD administrator Amelia Clark know they did not approve of her decision to fire Lutz in the midst of a global pandemic.

PROTEC17 teamed up with the Washington State Nurses’ Association (WSNA) to send a letter to the Spokane Regional Board of Health. Simultaneously, members decided to hold a ‘Vote of No Confidence’ for Administrator Clark’s handling of Lutz’s termination.

A public meeting to discuss the firing was scheduled, and despite the short 48-hour notice, over 5,000 letters and emails were submitted by community members, public health workers, and friends of Dr. Lutz, asking the Board to reverse the firing. Unfortunately, Board members were not swayed.

Disappointed, but not deterred, PROTEC17 members continued to write letters and speak out to the media. A Washington State Board of Health meeting was held on November 9, and after hearing

multiple complaints and public testimony from the Spokane community, they voted to open an investigation. The independent investigation will focus on whether Clark violated state law when she removed Dr. Lutz from his position before a public meeting was held.

Additionally, a new group was formed – the Public Health Action Coalition Teams of Spokane (PHACTS). The coalition includes health care, labor, education, non-profits, political and community groups, and business associations who will work together to hold those accountable who have betrayed public trust. The group will file the necessary complaints with appropriate state agencies in charge of health, governance, and transparency, and respond immediately to future instances of public health being undermined in Spokane.

Though this event was traumatic for many PROTEC17 members, and an unnecessary disruption to the important work they do, it showed that when we stand together we can make a difference. ■



PROTEC17 SRHD members at one of three rallies in support of Dr. Lutz during the first week of November. Photo, at left (left to right): Kayla DeBusk, Betsy Bertelsen, and Anna Haarsager Halloran. Photo, above: Latia Christen.

Young Members of PROTEC17 (YMP) host virtual ballot party

Since mid-2019, a core group of members at King County have been working to get their fellow young colleagues more engaged in their union. They call themselves the Young Members of PROTEC17, or YMP for short.

In the year they've been in existence, the YMP has grown and mobilized members in new and creative ways, including their most recent virtual ballot party held on Oct. 27 – a week before election day. The goal of the ballot party was to make sure that young voices are heard in the political sphere that shapes public policy and directly impacts young working people's lives.

When asked about the ballot party, Lucas Smith, one of the YMP leaders, said: "We wanted to provide a space to discuss our values as union members and how those align (or don't) with the various candidates and measures."

While it was a small event, and many members had already cast their ballot by

mail, the group had fun getting to know each other better outside of work.

After the massive nationwide protests against police brutality and systematic racism this year, the YMP group pushed to formalize and identify ways in which members could bring the fight for a socially just society into King County's workplace and PROTEC17 itself.

"YMP members know that the struggle for dignity at work and the fight against racism are inextricably linked," said Kelsey Hopkins, another YMP leader. "Activities like the ballot party help us discuss and further this idea every day."

In 2021, the YMP is planning to take part in more actions within PROTEC17 and the community, and wants to become a hub for young union members who want to build power in their workplaces and beyond.

"As the next generation of workers and union members, I look forward to more young members taking leadership roles in our union and driving a reinvigorated labor movement," said Smith who is also running

for King County Chapter President alongside Hopkins who was nominated for Vice President, and several other YMP members who are stepping up for Regional Executive Committee (REC) positions.

"As we watch strike waves and the labor movement re-sparking nationwide – while at the same time workers' rights face more attacks than ever – we can see both the necessity and the hope for a bright future of organized labor, and young leaders will be key to that."

The YMP is currently made up of King County Chapter members under age 40, who meet virtually every Thursday at lunchtime. In the new year, they hope to collaborate on union-wide issues with other young member and social justice interest groups forming within the Seattle and Portland Chapters. The YMP is also willing to lend their expertise to other Chapters who are interested in building a young members group in their workplace. To get connected, email Union Representative Alex Il at alex@protec17.org. ■

Young Members of PROTEC17 (YMP) at their virtual ballot party on Oct. 27, including Lucas Smith in the upper left and Kelsey Hopkins in the center.



ELECTION 2020: PROTEC17 members make endorsements, demand ‘count every vote’, and prepare for legislative session

Earlier this year, PROTEC17 re-envisioned its political program as one where members would join together to get to know candidates running for local and statewide races. For the 2020 general election, the PROTEC17 political action committee (PAC) made over 50 endorsements for candidates and measures that align with our union values to equitably serve and protect working families.

In Washington state, members chose to endorse 40 legislators, 27 of which will represent our workers in Olympia next session. Notably, T’wina Nobles, a mom, educator, small business owner, CEO of the Tacoma Urban League, and University Place School Board Director, will be the first Black State Senator in Washington in a decade. With her election, Nobles flipped the historically red 28th district, beating out incumbent Steve O’Ban. Alongside Nobles, other PROTEC17-endorsed candidates, including Jesse Johnson and newcomer Jamila Taylor in the 30th district, and John Lovick in the 44th, mean that our state legislature will have more Black representatives than ever before.

PROTEC17 also supported the City of Seattle Transit measure, which was approved and funds bus service and other transit programs that will be sure to have positive impacts for our members at Metro, WSDOT, and beyond. Our members also supported Proposition 1 in King County, which will issue \$1.74 billion in bonds for renovations and improvements to the Harborview Medical Center.

Making these endorsement decisions involved more engagement than ever, with over 25 PROTEC17 members participating in interviews. Members asked candidates questions about the housing crisis, austerity cuts to budgets, as well as racial justice



PROTEC17 at the ‘Count Every Vote’ Rally on Nov. 5 in downtown Seattle.

and union solidarity. For members, this was an opportunity to get to know their elected officials face-to-face — or as close as it gets during a pandemic, virtually.

“I was able to meet face-to-face with future representatives and learn what they are trying to do for our communities,” said Saada Brown, City of Seattle member, PROTEC17 Steward, and endorsement committee participant.

“Being a part of the political action committee has inspired me to pay closer attention to see if these elected officials are going to do what they’ve committed to do,” she continued.

PROTEC17 will urge elected officials to be accountable to their promises during the upcoming legislative session in Washington, which will convene predominantly through virtual meetings starting on January 11. An upside to this is that it will be easier than ever for Washingtonians to testify, without having to trek to Olympia. Since the rise of COVID-19 and a new normal of working and schooling from home,

one of the issues that candidates habitually brought up was broadband access and reliability, especially in more rural areas of the state.

Another item on the horizon for the upcoming session is a transportation package led by Chair of the Transportation Committee, Representative Jake Fey. There is also talk of multiple ways to create new progressive revenue for WA, including a capital gains tax, which has remained a possibility in previous years.

In Portland, three new commissioners will create a very different political landscape in City Hall come January. Mingus Mapps will take the seat currently held by Commissioner Chloe Eudaly — who was endorsed by PROTEC17 members — and will join Carmen Rubio, Dan Ryan, JoAnn Hardesty, and re-elected Mayor Ted Wheeler to complete the five-member City Council. PROTEC17 will continue efforts to regularly meet with all members of council to form a productive relationship.

In other Portland shake-ups, the Metro transportation bond that would have provided a significant source of funding for regional transportation, including projects being undertaken by PBOT, failed in the face of major opposition from large corporate donors. However, the Parks operating levy, endorsed by PROTEC17, passed by a wide margin. This will provide critical funding for the Parks Bureau moving forward and averts major cuts that would have occurred due to COVID-related impacts.

Members across the Northwest and around the country were especially engaged in this election season, as evidenced by the highest voter turnout in history. PROTEC17 members also raised their voices at the many rallies around the region calling for every vote to be counted. ■

**To learn more about PROTEC17’s political program, visit:
www.protec17.org/political-action**

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