

insight

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS

OF PROTEC17

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King County Regional Homelessness Authority members join PROTEC17!





On the Cover:

Meet the newest PROTEC17 members, from the King County Regional Homelessness Authority, who joined our union in June 2022. These members are part of a new multi-agency, collaborative effort to address the complex issue of homelessness in the region. Read more on page 10. ■



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PROTEC17 Executive Board Election Notice

Nominations are now open for the following PROTEC17 Executive Board positions: City of Seattle Trustee (currently held by Rachael Brooks) and King County Trustee (currently held by Jennell Hicks). The terms are three (3) years and will expire in 2026.

Details:

- (1) Only members at the City of Seattle are eligible to be nominated for the City of Seattle Trustee position. Only members at King County are eligible to be nominated for the King County Trustee position. The State of Washington, City of Portland, Greater Northwest, and At Large Trustee positions will be up for election in ensuing years.
- (2) 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.
- (3) No member of PROTEC17 shall run for more than one Executive Board office concurrently.
- (4) 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 Wed., Oct. 5, 2022.
- (5) Names of all nominees, except those who declare in writing that they decline the nomination, will appear on the ballot.
- (6) 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 Mon., Oct. 10, 2022.
- (7) An electronic ballot will be emailed to each member in good standing at his/her last known email address.
- (8) The ballots will be counted after 5 p.m. on Wed., Nov. 16, 2022.

To request a paper ballot, or if you have any questions regarding the election, please contact the PROTEC17 Election chair at: PROTEC17 Election Chair, 2900 Eastlake Avenue East, Suite 300, Seattle WA 98102, or union@protec17.org.

insight

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Karen Estevenin
Executive Director

Union values in action



What are our Union values? Fairness, dignity, and respect at work; freedom from all forms of oppression, including racism; opportunities to thrive and grow at work and in our communities; wages that support a good quality of life; wholistic medical benefits for ourselves and our loved ones; and time off for rest and to enjoy life. Winning concrete victories reflecting these values is one way of many that we build power for working people.

In this issue of *Insight*, we highlight these values in action at PROTEC17. In recent negotiations with the State of Washington, Clark County, King County and the City of Portland, members won wages and equitably paid bonuses, fair telework agreements, additional time off, improved benefits, and much more. Bargaining team members at the City of Portland, along with PROTEC17 staff, also led a new interest-based approach and no-games “affinity” bargaining to make the negotiations process itself more reflective of our values (p. 6-7).

However, the fight continues for many. Pierce County members along with coalition partners picketed this spring demanding a conclusion to their long contract negotiations that includes fair wages (photos p. 9). Similarly, King County Transit Chiefs and Superintendents voted down the County’s contract proposal (p.5) and will now move into mediation to seek an agreement that recognizes the value of the work and sacrifices made.

We also have newly organized groups exercising their rights to a voice at work for their first time! Employees of the newly formed King County Regional Homelessness Authority just voted to join PROTEC17 and now are preparing to negotiate their first contract. I invite you to read more on page 10 and hopefully you will be as inspired as I am by this incredible group of people, their journey to form a union, and the noble work they do to eradicate homelessness.

Our commitment to respect and dignity, freedom, and justice means setbacks must be acknowledged as well. The Supreme Court’s decision to strip women and people with a uterus access to reproductive care is an attack on these values. I respect those who may not see this as a workplace issue. But from my decades of experience in the labor movement, I see a person’s ability to make reproductive choices deeply connected to our ability to work, to equally engage in public life, to take care of ourselves and our loved ones, and to our well-being.

Still, in the face of this set-back, and others that have and will yet come, I remain hopeful for progress in our current moment. As workers, our roots run deep and intertwine to form a strong and unbreakable bond, and it is this ability to unite around our values despite our surface differences that causes our bosses fear. It is our power. And when we can respect our different perspectives, and lock arms in the name of our values as seen in the stories in this issue, we are formidable. If we wield this power with inclusivity, grace, and compassion, we can change our world — we need to.

In compassion and solidarity,

Clark County members ratify contract after difficult negotiations

Kudos to the Clark County bargaining team for holding the line in what proved to be one of the most challenging bargaining cycles in decades.

For many years, PROTEC17 has bargained our main contract as part of a coalition with OPEIU Local 11, LiUNA Local 335, and AFSCME Local 307. This time, there was strong disagreement within the coalition regarding the employer's reduction in annual wage increases. The coalition hung together until a Last-Best-Final offer was made by Clark County. At that time, all unions within the coalition took the offer to members. OPEIU and LiUNA members voted to accept the offer and conclude bargaining, while PROTEC17 and AFSCME members rejected the offer and proceeded independently to mediation.

Members of the bargaining team spent significant amounts of time providing hard data and compelling personal accounts of the increased cost of living in Clark County. When encouraged by the City Manager to look for gains that didn't require Council authorization, they continued to develop alternative proposals to seek out improvements for members. Ultimately, that hard work paid off in a retention bonus that is landing in member paychecks this summer, with a second payment in December.

Members of the Bargaining Team included Cary Armstrong and Sarah Smith for the Engineers and Katie Carle and Ben Ransonet for the Appraisers. PROTEC17 member Alex van Ditner provided a tremendous amount of data and research, and also served as an alternate. Thank you to these members for their dedication to fighting for their co-workers. ■

State members negotiate new contract; COLA and lump sum payment July 1

Negotiations for the 2023-2025 contract

with the State of Washington are underway! PROTEC17 bargaining team members

are advocating for a fair cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), along with targeted increases for positions with demonstrated recruitment and retention issues. Members are also advocating for many other positive changes to contractual benefits and working conditions, like teleworking language, improvements to the Shared Leave program, the ability to use leave to supplement the State's paid family leave program, and improving contracting out language.

Contract negotiations will continue through the summer and are expected to wrap up by the end of September in order to meet the Oct. 1 State-mandated deadline for inclusion in the Governor's proposed budget. PROTEC17 State members should check their personal emails for regular updates on negotiations progress and keep your eyes peeled for a ratification vote in early Fall.

In addition to negotiations for next year's contract, State members at the Department of Licensing, the Washington State Patrol, and the Washington State Department of Transportation should expect to see several wage adjustments to their paychecks this July – including a 3.25% COLA.

When the 2021-2023 State contract was being negotiated in 2020, the world was in the middle of a global pandemic and the State budget scenario looked dire. At the time, PROTEC17 members agreed to monthly furloughs and no COLA as a



sacrifice to help the State. But when State revenues were exceeding expectations in the Spring of 2021, the PROTEC17 bargaining team jumped into action.

Through advocacy efforts in Olympia and a contract reopener, the team was able to eliminate the furloughs and negotiate a COLA and other increases for 2022.

In addition to the 3.25% COLA that went into effect on July 1, 2022, State members who worked through the most dangerous part of the pandemic will receive lump sum payments in recognition of their sacrifices. Visit the PROTEC17 website (protec17.org/members) to find the details on the lump sum payment.

And, in an unprecedented move last year, the legislature also approved funds to go toward targeted increases for classifications that had significant recruitment and/or retention issues. As a result, three PROTEC17 classifications will be receiving additional increases: Licensing Service Representative 1s will be receiving a two-range increase (approximately 5%), Licensing Service Representative 2s will receive a one-range increase (approximately 2.5%), and our Avalanche Forecast and Control Specialists will receive a four-range increase (approximately 10%).

While we didn't get all the increases for which we advocated, this win represents significant progress for classifications for which we've had difficulty getting increases in the past.

If you have any questions about current contract negotiations, the 2022 COLA, lump sum payments, or wage adjustments, please contact your Union Representative. ■

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

King County members ratify agreement with 12.5% COLA over four years; Transit Chiefs, Sups head to mediation

After votes were tallied on June 27, the new Coalition Labor Agreement (CLA) was ratified by 12 of 14 PROTEC17 bargaining units at King County. While this was an extremely challenging negotiation, the bargaining team did an excellent job of representing PROTEC17 members over nearly two years at the table to secure some major victories in the 2021-2024 contract.

Working together with other unions as part of the King County Coalition of Unions was part of the strategy to achieve a strong Coalition Labor Agreement (CLA). The CLA contract, which covers economic items and other benefits and protections for most union members at the County, includes significant wins like a 12.5 percent wage increase over four years, telecommuting language, extra holidays, and many more.

Moreover, the PROTEC17 bargaining teams were able to secure additional benefits by negotiating the appendices agreements specific to their bargaining units. PROTEC17 leaders from all units stepped up and advocated for their co-workers at these small table negotiations.

The contract runs through 2024 and, in the meantime, PROTEC17 leaders will continue to strategize and build our membership over the next few years to ensure we are ready for the next challenge.

“Being part of the recent contract bargaining team allowed me to see that the gatekeepers of change are not one person nor our employer. It is US as a united voice of change.”

Jose Romo Ramirez, PROTEC17 King County Bargaining Team Member



Members of the PROTEC17 bargaining team and staff celebrate the new contract on July 6.

“This was the toughest contract negotiations I have ever been a part of, but we stood our ground and our solidarity and unity paid off,” said Jennell Hicks, PROTEC17 Trustee and King County bargaining team member.

While the vast majority of King County members have ratified the CLA, the Transit Chiefs and Superintendents bargaining units continue to face challenging negotiations (as this issue went to press). The County is proposing cuts to their contracts, including a reduction to their holiday bank, disparate executive leave language, and not filling vacancies, to name a few.

“We recommended a “NO” vote and the membership agreed,” said PROTEC17 Superintendent Bargaining Team member Jake Jacobovitch. “We are off to mediation and if an equitable solution can’t be found there, we’ll see about arbitration.”

PROTEC17 King County members stand in solidarity with Chiefs and Superintendents as they continue to fight for what’s fair.

“At times these negotiations were frustrating, but I knew my union brothers, sisters, and siblings would benefit from

“This contract was won by union members standing together, sharing priorities, serving on the bargaining team, signing petitions, and not backing down.”

Lucas Smith, PROTEC17 King County Chapter President and Bargaining Team Member

our efforts,” said Marlon Hall, a Public Health employee and member of the bargaining team. “That was the motivation to keep showing up, and keep working to get the best deal we could.”

The agreements that have been ratified by members will now go to the King County Council and Executive for final approval. Once those steps are complete, members will see their wage increases and retroactive pay in their paychecks. Check your email and the PROTEC17 King County webpage (protec17.org/member/king) for updates. Thank you to everyone who served (and continues to serve!) on the bargaining teams. ■

2022-2025 contract ratified! Portland team wins big using Interest-Based and Affinity Bargaining

As PROTEC17 members at the City of Portland prepared for negotiations of their 2022-2025 contract last year, they understood they'd be facing a very different set of challenges than previous bargaining cycles. A majority of members were still working remotely, negotiations with other City unions were not progressing, and members had a very different set of expectations and priorities given the immense changes to work and life that occurred because of the pandemic. But through the nearly year-long process of interest-based bargaining, the negotiations team was able to secure big wins for Portland members.

Interest-Based Bargaining (IBB)

Back in 2020, when PROTEC17 demanded to bargain a change in the City's merit pay practice, union member-leaders did not realize the impact it would have on bargaining the full contract a year later.

At the time, management was reluc-

tant to change the merit pay system, as they saw it as a motivational tool. However, they agreed to approach the subject through Interest-Based Bargaining (IBB) with a trained facilitator from the Oregon Employment Relations Board (ERB).

The IBB process, which starts with eight hours of required training for all parties, is based on four principles: 1) Separate the people from the problem, 2) Focus on interests, 3) Create options to satisfy mutual interests, and 4) Evaluate options to develop consensus solutions. It relies on both employer and union jointly identifying and reviewing data for a given topic or issue. With the presence of a skilled neutral party (the ERB facilitator), both sides are challenged to remain focused on the shared interests and to find creative solutions that will meet those interests.

Using the IBB process helped the PROTEC17 team secure an early win that moved all represented classifications off of the biased merit system and onto the step system (see story in previous issue

of *Insight*.) This success gave the team confidence in the IBB process.

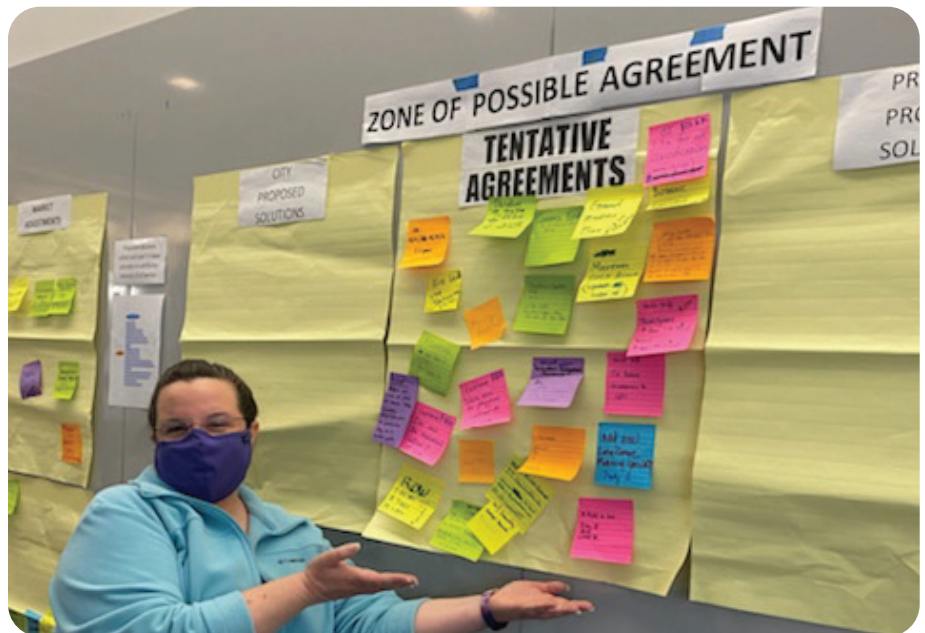
Using data and persuasion

Each bargaining team member -- Paul Cone, Rachel Burlington, Kevin Bond, Michael Goins, Andrew Neuman, Rebecca Sherman, Janet Strahl, Emily Tabachnick, and Emily Wilson -- stepped up to lead a subcommittee on topics that were identified from comments and rankings in the pre-bargaining membership survey, which included: telework, professional development, contracting out, seniority, equity, attendance incentive/sick leave, workplace safety, and wages. In each area, subcommittee leaders crafted winning arguments and proposed creative solutions.

The bargaining team followed up with a contract victory that expands professional development opportunities and removes barriers to access professional development funds. They also secured language to help avoid and reduce impacts from future economic downturns.

"Being on the bargaining team opened my eyes to similar struggles [with contracting out] in other bureaus, and related issues with other non-represented workers. It's exciting to be part of the changes that should create more opportunities for our members."

Janet Strahl, PROTEC17 Portland Bargaining Team Member



PROTEC17 bargaining team member Janet Strahl with the final tentative agreements.

For more quotes from the team, visit: protec17.org/news



IBB in action: members of the PROTEC17 team with the City of Portland's negotiators, and the ERB Facilitator.

Staying focused on the interests of PROTEC17 members and rooting arguments in the City of Portland's adopted values — *Anti-Racism | Equity | Transparency | Communication | Collaboration | Fiscal Responsibility* — proved a winning combination. Time after time, discussing the data together and reflecting it back to the shared interests, forced the City to acknowledge where there was bias in their existing systems or where it was otherwise failing its workers.

However, in some cases, relying on data was not an option because the City simply wasn't tracking the right metrics to address the issue or problem. For example, the City of Portland could not provide any comprehensive data on the number of contract employees, let alone the number doing PROTEC17 work.

But with a myriad of member stories documenting use of contractors, the bargaining team was still able to leverage the IBB process to gain traction in this area. The new contract adds guardrails to curb the use of contract employees and overhauls the system that requires the City

to notify PROTEC17 when it plans to use contractors.

Affinity Bargaining for Economics

The IBB process can be utilized for a wide variety of topics, but it is not generally used for economic items like wage or cost-of-living adjustments. The ERB facilitator recommended trying Affinity Bargaining (AB) for economics. AB is a collaborative process that requires a great deal of upfront work to develop a shared data set that includes a total budget and costing model, but once the leg-work is done, it is possible to reach a Tentative Agreement (TA) in as little as one day.

The AB process lent more transparency to the bargaining process overall because PROTEC17 members could see how each proposal or adjustment affected the total economic picture. This put more power in the hands of the bargaining team to determine what to prioritize and how to ensure money wasn't left on the table.

Ultimately, the team reached a TA on economics with the City within three days — record time! You can find the final TA on

the PROTEC17 website at: protec17.org/member/portland. ■

“Overall, I’m extremely satisfied with the results of our bargaining. We were able to bring 30 classifications up to market and still get wage adjustments for all our other members over the annual COLA. I think we also moved the needle on equity in many ways that weren’t possible before.”

Paul Cone, PROTEC17 Portland Chapter President and Bargaining Team Member

PROTEC17 celebrates Pride, Juneteenth, and Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month



Above: PROTEC17 attended the first Juneteenth celebration organized by King County and City of Seattle employees at Seward Park on June 20! ■



PROTEC17 members Jessy Hardy, Nina Wester, and Chris Lee (above) from King County and the City of Seattle attended the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance gala event this spring. They were inspired by the solidarity between the various labor organizations, and learned about collective action and organizing efforts going on locally and globally. ■



PRIDE!

PROTEC17 marched with local labor unions as part of the AFL-CIO's 'Pride at Work' contingency in this year's Seattle Pride Parade on June 26! ■



PROTEC17 members rally for fairness, respect, and the ability to organize for all workers



On May 17, PROTEC17 members from Pierce County (pictured in the three images at left and above) held an informational picket alongside members from Teamsters 117, WFSCE Council 2, Teamsters 313 and IBEW 483 to show solidarity in our collective fight for a fair contract. Despite being in negotiations since last summer, and using a mediator this spring, there has been no movement from Pierce County on a fair cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). Future actions are in the works! Pierce County members should check their emails for the latest. ■



PROTEC17 members stood in solidarity at several rallies for Starbucks Workers United this spring, including one just a few blocks from the PROTEC17 office on Eastlake in Seattle. ■

New workers at King County Regional Homelessness Authority join PROTEC17

PROTEC17 welcomes our newest members from the King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA) to our union!

The KCRHA is a new agency that coordinates services, funding, and policy for people experiencing homelessness in Seattle and King County. Its mission is to significantly decrease homelessness throughout the County using data, proven practices, and equity and social justice principles.

“Our ultimate goal would be to end homelessness — to be out of a job,” said PROTEC17 member Claire Guilmotte, who works as the Evaluation and Analytics Coordinator for King County Regional Homelessness Authority. “It’s aspirational, but we show up at work because we really believe that homelessness is an issue that can be resolved.”

Founded in 2021, the agency was born from a collaboration between the City of Seattle, King County, and related community groups to address the complex issues that people experiencing homelessness face. A key part of their mission is to center the lived experiences of people impacted by homelessness in order to best serve the people who need the most help. By consolidating the municipal and county response systems under one centralized authority,

expanding physical and behavioral health options, and increasing access to affordable housing, among other aims, the KCRHA hopes to ultimately achieve “functional zero” status, meaning that when homelessness does occur, it is rare, temporary, and one-time.

“My greatest hope for this effort is to reach functional zero,” said new PROTEC17 member Raphael Hartman, who, as an Ombudsman in the KCRHA, helps people to navigate the system and engages with them to gather feedback and recommend system-level changes. “[We can do this by] allocating funds to providers who serve those who are the most marginalized, and in the meantime having a more quick streamlined process for community members who are in need of housing resources.”

Tony Machacha agrees. As the Community Capacity Manager at the KCRHA, Machacha supports smaller, community-based organizations who serve the homeless but who have not previously been included in the contracting process to manage city funds. Growing up in a family of public servants and union members, and a former PROTEC17 member in Public Health, he likened returning to the union to “coming home again.”

“I want to be able to bring my best to my work every day,” said Machacha. “Life is full of demands — we’re providers for families and parents, and for extended families on other continents, too. I want to know that I can be all in on my work without peripheral worries about my job security, insurance coverage, time off, or a million other distractions.”

Guilmotte echoes Machacha’s values of dedication to the work and community, and solidarity with coworkers.

“I care about my colleagues and the work we do,” said Guilmotte, who, as Evaluation and Analytics Coordinator, collects and curates quantitative and qualitative data on homelessness and builds new data systems to support the programs and services of the KCRHA. “Bringing the union values to our staff to determine what work looks like for us will help us serve the community — and all of King County — better.”

On the path to eradicating homelessness in our region is ensuring that the employees doing the work have a voice on the job and the support that they need to be successful. PROTEC17 is proud to represent the employees who work on the frontlines to end homelessness. Please join us in welcoming them to our union! ■

“Our ultimate goal would be to end homelessness — to be out of a job. It’s aspirational, but we show up at work because we really believe that homelessness is an issue that can be resolved.”

Claire Guilmotte, PROTEC17 Member and
Evaluation and Analytics Coordinator
King County Regional Homelessness Authority



New PROTEC17 members at the KCRHA celebrate their card check election.

Reproductive Rights are Workers' Rights!

PROTEC17 stands with the millions of women, girls, transgender and gender-non-conforming people, and all working people for reproductive healthcare, justice, and rights.

Since 1918, PROTEC17 members have joined together to create better lives for ourselves and our communities. In order to achieve these goals, we have fought for the freedoms to live, work and thrive, and the ability to secure rights on the job, earn family-sustaining wages, and equitable treatment for all workers. These core protections and economic strengths are necessary to give working people the ability to make meaningful choices in our lives, free from the arbitrary tyranny of unfair employers or exploitative workplaces.

Few choices are as significant as whether or not to have a child. It is not only a tremendous personal decision, but a critical economic decision as well. As union members, if we are to be able to exercise our hard-won freedoms, then this decision must remain fully ours.

The Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* directly threatens workers' ability to govern their own lives and economic situation.

For women and pregnant people, this decision represents the stripping away of agency and freedom. It is nothing short of an absolute denial of dignity, respect and humanity. It substantiates the right to exert control over half of our population's bodies as if we are incompetent and incapable of caring for our own bodies. And yet, this decision is only the beginning.

The Court's ruling could very well call into question the right to use birth control, the right to marry the person who we choose, and the right for consenting adults to do as they wish in the privacy of



their own home without being arrested or charged with crimes. Justice Clarence Thomas directly called for the Court to eliminate these rights, paving the way for attacks on our autonomy, liberty, and privacy.

PROTEC17 joins our union siblings here in the Pacific Northwest and nationally in affirming that reproductive rights are workers' rights. Wages, benefits, the ability to have time off for vacation and take care of oneself or family, a retirement with dignity, fairness, and respect are some of the many wins we have secured over the years in contracts and workplaces. A person's choice of when to have a child is intricately connected to all of these and much more. We will not cease fighting for our values, including healthcare rights, reproductive rights, and all reproductive choices. ■

“Workers and their families — particularly Black and Indigenous folks and people of color — face serious harm when access to reproductive health is limited or denied. These restrictions fall heaviest on our BIPOC siblings, but they are a threat to all of us.”

Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO

**For additional information and resources, visit:
www.protec17.org/political-action**

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

Could you qualify for student loan forgiveness?

Hundreds of PROTEC17 members could be eligible for the student loan forgiveness program that was recently revamped and reintroduced by the Federal government. According to The Student Borrower Protection Center (SBPC), Washington State has nearly 180,000 residents who are eligible for the program, but only about 3,500 who have had debt cancelled under the program.

While the program isn't new – it's been around since 2007 – it has been notoriously underutilized, difficult to navigate, and prohibitively complicated – until the Biden administration recently made major changes to the program to help more borrowers qualify.

The benefit is available to federal student loan borrowers who work full-time (at least 30 hours a week) for a qualified public service or non-profit employer; this includes Federal, State, local, tribal, and military personnel.

To be eligible, you also need to have: Direct Loans (or consolidate other federal student loans into a Direct Loan), made 120 qualifying payments, and an income-driven repayment plan. Lastly, you need to complete an Employer Certification Form annually – or whenever you change employers – and submit it to the U.S. Department of Education.

Nationwide, more than nine million public service workers are eligible for debt cancellation through the program, yet only 150,000 borrowers have received forgiveness, and less than 15 percent have filed the paperwork to enter the program. Less than two percent of eligible borrow-

ers have had debt cancelled through the program nationwide.

Right now, there is also a one-time loan forgiveness waiver to count prior student loan payments that previously didn't count toward student loan forgiveness. If you think you might qualify, or have questions about the program, visit studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/public-service. ■

