

# insight

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS

OF PROTEC17

Nov/Dec.  
2022  
Vol 27  
No. 5



**PROTEC17 honors 20-year  
Executive Board member**

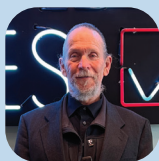
***PLUS: REC Recap, 2023-25 Strategic Planning, and more!***





### On the Cover:

Twenty-year Executive Board member Sean Simmons – pictured on cover with the Board – is stepping down from his role to accept a promotion at WSDOT. PROTEC17 commemorated his dedication to our union at the October Regional Executive Committee (REC) meeting where a member leadership award was named in his honor. Read more on pages 5 and 10. ■



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## Season's Greetings

From all of us at PROTEC17,  
we wish you happy holidays and a  
healthy, peaceful new year.

## insight

Nov/Dec 2022  
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## insight

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Karen Estevenin  
Executive Director

## Taking time to celebrate

**A**s another year comes to a close, I find myself marveling at all we've been able to accomplish together in 2022. From solidifying strong contracts and securing important wins at the bargaining table, to training dozens of new Stewards and adding new employers and classifications to our growing membership, to continuing our work to become an anti-racist organization (p.7), it is truly amazing what we've been able to do in just one year.

The end of 2022 also marks the end of our 2020-2022 Strategic Plan. In the three years of this plan, we set and reached dozens of goals that helped our organization grow stronger. This fall, we began the process of creating the 2023-2025 Strategic Plan, which you can read more about in this issue (p.4). The committee is now combing through the input from thousands of members via surveys and Chapter meetings to identify themes and priorities for the next three years, and will present the plan to the Regional Executive Committee (REC) in February for adoption.

Speaking of the REC, we had a productive and inspiring meeting this fall (p.5) where delegates helped conduct the business of our union, and we honored many member leaders for their dedication to PROTEC17. *This is one of the best parts of my job!* This included recognizing long-time members like Alma Gene Harris and Jake Jacobovitch who have retired, as well as new Stewards and leaders, like Shomari Anderson, Jamie Fackler, and Claire Guilmette, who have taken up the torch.

At the REC, we also celebrated twenty-year Executive Board member Sean Simmons, who is stepping down from his position as Vice-President of our union due to a well-deserved promotion at the Washington State Department of Transportation. I will miss his wisdom, his calm and steady demeanor, and his thoughtful contributions to our Board meetings. He has always had the best interests of our union and members in mind at every step along the way. You can read more about Sean and an award that has been named in his honor on page 10.

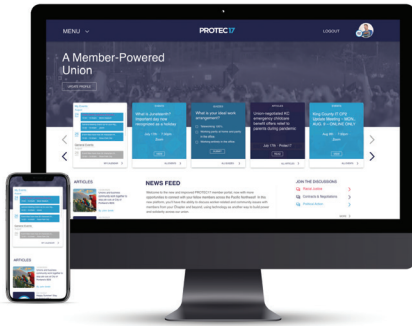
Truly, I would need this entire issue (and the next!) to highlight all of the PROTEC17 members who do good work – on the job, for our union, and in our communities. I am constantly in awe of the passion that drives you to work in public service and the solidarity you have in those shared values.

This holiday season, I hope you can take a moment to rest and to celebrate all that you've accomplished this year. Wishing you and your families health, happiness, and peace in 2023.

In gratitude and solidarity,

*Karen*

## PROTEC17 member portal offers a place to connect



**T**he new and improved PROTEC17 member portal launched this fall, and so far, nearly 1,500 members have registered for the platform designed to keep members connected and to foster dialogue in the digital realm.

This member-exclusive online space is THE place to find news, information and events, engage in fun activities, and most importantly, connect with your fellow members. Some cool new features include union-wide discussion forums on topics like Negotiations, Political Action, and Racial Justice, PLUS chapter and group spaces to chat with fellow members about the issues that are important to you in your workplaces and communities.

If you haven't already, register TODAY at: [members.protec17.org](https://members.protec17.org). ■

## Members give input to help shape our union's 2023-2025 Strategic Plan

**T**his fall, PROTEC17 began another strategic planning process to create a road map for our union for the next three years. Once complete, the 2023-2025 Strategic Plan will include goals and priorities that will guide us into the future.

Our organization's first strategic plan was created back in 2019, shortly after the arrival of Executive Director Karen Estevenin. As part of that process, thousands of members gave their feedback via surveys, Chapter meetings, focus groups, emails, one-on-ones, and more. The Regional Executive Committee (REC) and the Executive Board also played a pivotal role.

With all of that input, PROTEC17 developed a mission statement, a vision statement, and three high-level priorities that guided our goals and objectives from 2020-2022. They were: grow our organization, develop and train member leaders, and elevate racial justice initiatives.

As we near the end of our first plan, the strategic planning committee is celebrat-

ing the many forward strides we were able to make as an organization, even as the pandemic threw us a wild curve ball at the very start of the plan. These successes include everything from organizing new members and improving our visibility, building a robust Steward and leader training program, and actively working to become an anti-racist organization through education and partnerships.

The committee is now assessing the changing landscape, needs, and priorities of PROTEC17 members post-pandemic, and will be combing through over 1,600 survey responses and feedback from this October's REC meeting (see more on next page) to shape the plan for 2023-2025 and determine the top priorities that members want to focus on for the next three years.

The plan will be brought to the REC delegate body at their February meeting for adoption. If you didn't have a chance to take the survey or give your feedback in Chapter meetings yet, please feel free to send your input to the committee at [future@protec17.org](mailto:future@protec17.org). ■



*Executive Director Karen Estevenin talks about the strategic planning process at the October REC.*

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



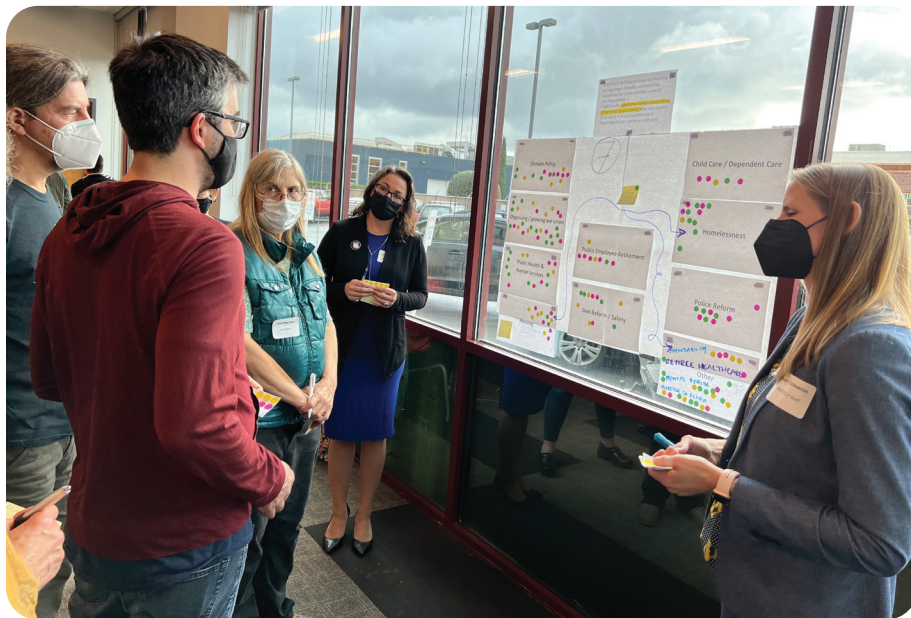
## Regional Executive Committee meets in-person to plan PROTEC17's future and honor member leaders



n Sat., Oct. 22, the PROTEC17 Regional Executive Committee (REC), our union's policy-making body, convened

in-person for the first time in three years at the Seattle Labor Temple to conduct the business of our union and to celebrate member leaders. On the agenda was an exercise to inform the 2023-25 Strategic Plan, as well as honoring several members with leadership awards for their important contributions to building worker power.

The meeting opened with a welcome by PROTEC17 President Rachael Brooks and a tribal land acknowledgement from Kasi Marita Pereira, Director of Racial and Gender Justice at the Washington State Labor Council. It was announced that Brooks and Executive Board member Jennell Hicks were uncontested in their bid for another term. They will be sworn in at the next meeting. The REC then motioned to approve the minutes from the February meeting.



REC Delegates Nick CastroLang (Spokane Health), Paul Cone (Portland) and Dorothy Voss (WSDOT) give their input on priorities for the 2023-25 strategic plan, as PROTEC17 President Rachael Brooks (Seattle) and Executive Director Karen Estevenin look on.

After hearing about new members who've recently joined our union, the body also approved the creation of two Chapters for members at two new PROTEC17-represented employers – the Port of Seattle and the King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA).

Delegates heard a 'state-of-the-union' update from Executive Director Karen Estevenin that emphasized our successes in 2022, including our burgeoning organizing program, many wins at the bargaining table, and progress in moving several racial justice initiatives forward. Delegates also heard a year-end budget review from Executive Board Secretary-Treasurer Jessica Garcia.

In an interactive exercise, delegates rotated around the room to answer and discuss seven questions that will be used by the 2023-25 Strategic Planning committee – along with survey results and member input from Chapter meetings, among other feedback – to shape our direction for the next three years (see more in article on previous page).

For the past several years, the fall REC meeting has also included the presentation of awards that recognize members who have gone above and beyond to support our union and their coworkers. This year's winners include Stewards of the Year Shomari Anderson and Jamie Fackler from the City of Seattle, and Organizer Extraordinaire Claire Guilmette (KCRHA).

In addition, several long-time PROTEC17 member leaders were honored with Gold Cards as they step into retirement, including Alma Gene Harris, a 40-year City of Seattle employee, and Jake Jacobovitch, a 37-year King County employee. An honorary Gold Card was also given to departing PROTEC17 Vice President Sean Simmons who has accepted a promotion out of the bargaining unit at WSDOT after serving for over 20 years on the Executive Board (see page 10 for full story).

Congrats to all of our winners, and thank you to all of the REC delegates for all you do for our union! ■



Gold Card recipient Jake Jacobovitch poses for a picture at the REC meeting at the Seattle Labor Temple.

## Seattle members sticker up for a strong contract!



n Dec. 7, thousands of union members at the City of Seattle wore stickers and used virtual backgrounds in support of the

Coalition of City Unions (CCU) bargaining team as they headed into one of their last negotiations sessions of the year with the City for the next contract.

The sticker campaign – called #RSPCTforCityWorkers – aimed to highlight five priorities for union members at the City: **R**acial equity, **S**afety, **P**ay/affordability, **C**limate justice, and **T**ime/work-life balance. This sticker day coincided with the discussion of several economic proposals on the table.

The PROTEC17 Seattle bargaining team was extremely pleased with the call to action, and felt the unity and solidarity going into negotiations.

The bargaining team is: Maxwell Bra-nham (SDCI), Rachael Brooks (SCL), Joey Bullock (SDOT), Belinda Chin (Parks), Arabella Corcoro (FAS), Walker Dodson



(SCL), Shawn Flue (HSD), Ashley Harrison (OLS), Ulysses Hillard (SPU), Jessica Ray (SFD), Rob Svetz (SDCI), Ariska Thompson (SPU), and Gretchen Waschke (HSD).

A huge part of the success of the campaign was due to the members of the Contract Action Team (CAT), which includes: Belinda Chin, Jamie Fackler, Alexis Izor, Chris Lee, Yun Pitre, Sundar Sharma, Lisa Uemoto, and Gretchen Waschke. These

member leaders were the point people for sticker distribution and helped to send text reminders to members the day before the event.

“It’s been really exciting to engage and connect with colleagues around this contract campaign, learning about what members do and what they need to be successful,” said Jamie Fackler, PROTEC17 Steward and CAT member.

“Union members across the Coalition have been enthusiastic in advancing our cause and working towards shared goals that will improve our working conditions,” he continued.

While the current contract expires on Dec. 31, 2022, the terms of that contract will be upheld as negotiations continue into the new year. Please reach out to the bargaining team, a CAT member, or your Union Representative if you have questions about contract negotiations or need to update your contact information to receive future updates. ■

**“It’s been really exciting to engage and connect with colleagues around this contract campaign... Union members across the Coalition have been enthusiastic about advancing our cause and working towards shared goals that will improve our working conditions.”**

Jamie Fackler, PROTEC17 Seattle Steward and Contract Action Team Member



Jamie Fackler, Seattle Steward and member of the Contract Action Team, poses with Seattle City Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda wearing their #RSPCTforCityWorkers stickers.



## Racial justice work continues; PROTEC17 BIPOC Member Group takes shape

**A**s part of our commitment to becoming an anti-racist organization, and along with the member-driven priority to elevate racial justice initiatives in our 2020-22 Strategic Plan, PROTEC17 staff and leaders have been creating new ways for members to connect and take action in order to build a more just and equitable world.

Over the last three years, staff and member-leaders have participated in trainings such as the *People's Institute for Undoing Racism*, and partnered with organizations such as *Cultures Connecting* to work internally on undoing organizational racism. We have also worked closely with the Oregon Labor Education and Research Center and the Washington State Labor Council to host and offer *Race and Labor* workshops that explore the intersection of labor and race and how we can change our labor movement.

In 2022, we have been focusing on



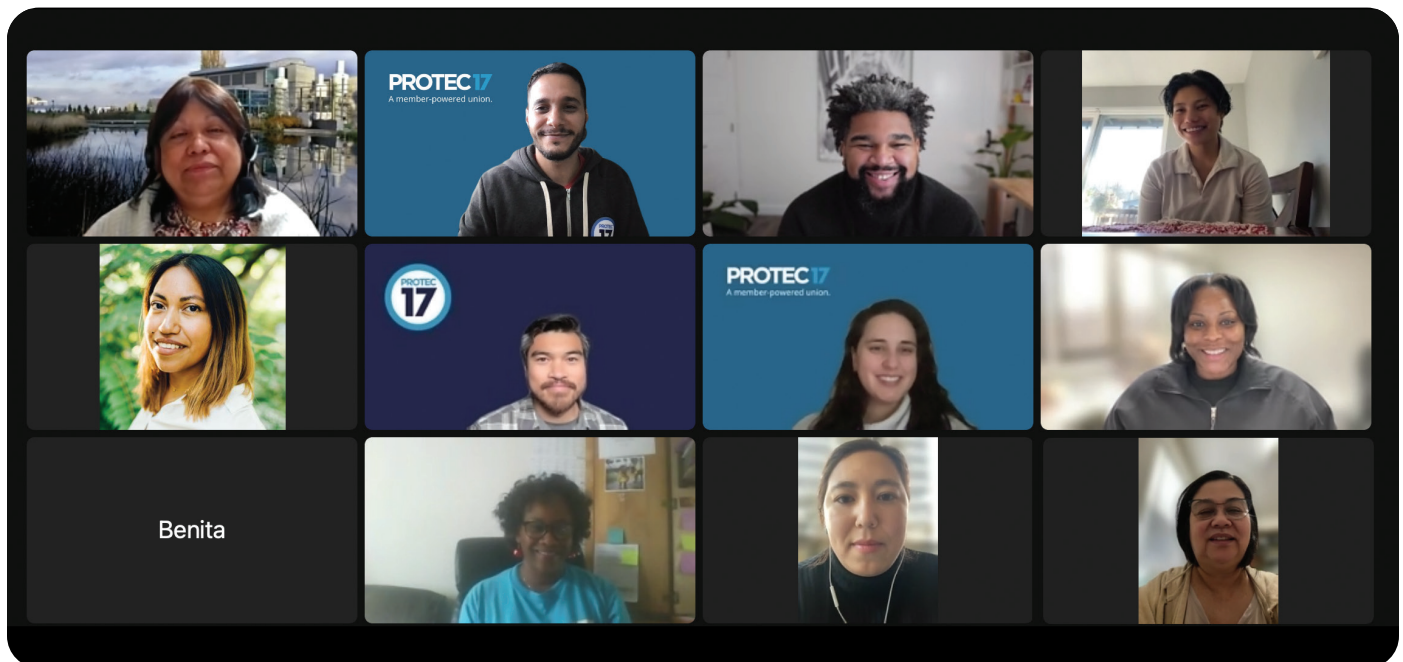
creating spaces for members to connect to others who identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), or those who identify as white-bodied people who want to actively work to dismantle racism.

In partnership with Jore Consulting, about 50 white-bodied staff and members assembled in September 2022 to engage in a six-month long cohort. Together, this

group is exploring topics such as understanding our roots, patterns of dominance, situations of conflict, accountability, and much more. It is an intensive and transformative program.

On Dec. 14, the first meeting of the PROTEC17 BIPOC member group gathered to connect, learn, share, and support each other (pictured below). As the group grows, they will shape their priorities and evolve to meet the needs of BIPOC members. If you identify as Black, Indigenous, or a person of color, and would like to attend the next meeting, please contact PROTEC17 Union Representative Youssef El Hamawi at [youssef@protec17.org](mailto:youssef@protec17.org).

"I am proud of the work that our organization is doing to actively become anti-racist," said PROTEC17 Executive Director Karen Estevenin. "While there is still much to do, I know that we have many dedicated members who are committed to moving this critical conversation and work forward." ■



PROTEC17 staff and members gathered for the first BIPOC member group virtual meeting on Dec. 14.

**Learn more about our racial justice work at: [protec17.org/racial-justice](https://protec17.org/racial-justice)**



## PROTEC17 members in King County help the unhoused stay warm in winter



When the weather gets severe – especially in the extreme cold of winter – it’s critical to help our unhoused neighbors stay warm and dry. For PROTEC17 members at the King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA), connecting people experiencing homelessness with shelters and resources to help them out of the cold and into permanent housing is a crucial part of their jobs.

Tamika Alston, Lead Systems Advocate and PROTEC17 member, leads a team of direct care support specialists at KCRHA who build relationships with clients in King County experiencing homelessness. This includes getting clients “document ready” so that they have the appropriate government documents needed to secure housing, employment, and other services, which can often be overwhelming.

Recently, Alston’s team collaborated with a community partner to open 40 hotel rooms in both north and south King County during the cold and snowy weather that hit the Puget Sound at the end of November. Through the help of the KCRHA, these 40 people will now be on the path to permanent housing. In addition, people living at several encampments in Seattle, including one near Lumen Field, have all recently been housed.

Other programs at KCRHA collaborate specifically with the severe weather shelters that open when the temperatures drop below freezing, including overnight and day centers in both municipal spaces, churches, and community centers.

While the KCRHA is only a bit more than a year old, the agency has been able to intake close to 1,000 clients this year, with about 250 of those who’ve never used

any formal resources and have never been in the social services system.

For Alston, who has been unhoused herself, the lived experience of homelessness allows her, and many of her KCRHA colleagues, to connect with clients on a personal level and offer hope.

“It takes just one second of hope to change someone’s mind about the direction they want to go,” said Alston. “That spark of hope says ‘I’m here for you,’ and ‘I’m a peer walking with you.’”

Alston, and all of her colleagues, are passionate about the work they are doing to help end homelessness by working closely with clients and listening to their needs. If you’d like to learn more about the programs and services of the KCRHA, please visit: [kcrha.org](https://kcrha.org).

**“It takes just one second of hope to change someone’s mind about the direction they want to go. That spark of hope says ‘I’m here for you,’ and ‘I’m a peer walking with you.’”**

*Tamika Alston, PROTEC17 Member and Lead Systems Advocate, King County Regional Homelessness Authority*



## PROTEC17 members represent at the *Tradeswomen Build Nations* conference in Las Vegas this fall

**M**embers from the City of Seattle represented PROTEC17 at the *Tradeswomen Build Nations* conference this fall. The annual conference, held from Oct. 28-30 this year, is put on by the North America's Building Trades Union (NABTU), a labor organization representing more than three million skilled craft professionals in the United States and Canada.

The conference brought a record 3,100 tradeswomen to Las Vegas – representing 48 states and 10 Canadian provinces – to share experiences and best practices, learn about new programs and opportunities in the industry, and engage with leaders from government, industry, and different trades unions.

The three-day event featured plenary sessions, workshops, and a banner parade on the Las Vegas strip. Workshops addressed a range of topics that are unique and critical for tradeswomen in the workforce.

The four PROTEC17 members who attended the event – Saada Brown, Michelle Minto, Lauren Salter, and Liana Woo – are Electrical Service Representatives at Seattle City Light. They found the workshops and the banner parade to be very inspiring.

“It was energizing to be at the largest conference in the construction trades industry, and to be surrounded by so many accomplished women, many of whom had to overcome many barriers to be where they are today,” said Woo, who works with commercial customers on utility projects that involve changes to their electrical service.

“We were surrounded by trailblazers in the industry who fought for the rights that we have now,” she continued. “They were able to accomplish what they did with the support of strong unions and other members alongside them – not just other women, but men and other allies in the union and community.”



PROTEC17 members Lauren Salter, Liana Woo, Michelle Minto, and Saada Brown from Seattle City Light attended the *Tradeswomen Build Nations* conference in Las Vegas this fall.

As for the parade, Woo said: “It was an awesome sight to look behind you and see the wave of others in the parade route stretch down the whole street with banners and posters supporting the trades unions, and chanting in support of women, the trades, and unions!”

One of the speakers at the conference included NABTU President Sean McGarvey who said:

“Trailblazing tradeswomen among our ranks are leading the future of our industry, and NABTU is committed to empowering them as we increase opportunities for and retention rates of women in unionized trade careers. Every day, inspiring tradeswomen advance and recruit more women into the family-sustaining unionized construction careers our affiliates provide. This conference is a celebration of these sisters and a testament to the growth of tradeswomen in our ranks.”

NABTU is dedicated to creating economic security and employment

opportunities for its construction workers. You can learn more about NABTU at [nabtu.org](http://nabtu.org). ■

**“It was energizing... to be surrounded by so many accomplished women, many of whom had to overcome many barriers to be where they are today... They were able to accomplish what they did with the support of strong unions and other members alongside.”**

Liana Woo, PROTEC17 Member and Commercial Electrical Services Representative Seattle City Light

## ‘Dedication to Service’ Award named in honor of Sean Simmons, twenty-year Executive Board member

**I**t takes a special person to dedicate over twenty years to a volunteer position, but for Sean Simmons, it’s been a privilege to serve on the PROTEC17 Executive Board. As he embarks on a new leadership position at the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) that will remove him from the bargaining unit, PROTEC17 has created a leadership award that will honor his name and his contributions to our union in his nearly 30 years as a member.

Simmons began working at WSDOT in 1993, and has served a variety of union leadership roles in that time, including as a Steward, a State negotiations team member, and Chapter officer. He was first elected to the PROTEC17 Executive Board as Secretary-Treasurer in 2002. In 2019, Simmons was elected to the Vice President position.

Having served for many years, Simmons has an invaluable historical knowledge of

PROTEC17, and has been a steady and reliable voice – especially during challenging times, like union structure and leadership changes, anti-union Supreme Court rulings, and a global pandemic. In addition to the countless hours served on the Executive Board, he has also been active with the WSDOT Memorial Fund for members killed on the job, and has twice served on the committee tasked with updating the PROTEC17 constitution.

At the Regional Executive Committee (REC) meeting in October, the PROTEC17 Executive Board and REC Delegates honored Simmons’ unwavering dedication to our union by naming a leadership award in his honor. The ‘Sean Simmons Dedication to Service Award’ will be henceforth given to members who demonstrate the same meritorious qualities of a true union leader.

At the meeting, Executive Director Karen Estevenin introduced the award, saying:

“I have relied on Sean’s deep knowledge of our union and history of our Executive Board countless times, and I know our Board all feels the same. He is always kind, compassionate, adds value to the dialogue, and I will miss working with him tremendously.”

In his acceptance speech, Simmons referred to PROTEC17 as part of his family. And while he finds it difficult to leave, he is confident that the Board is in excellent hands.

“It’s been a privilege serving you on the Board for all of these years,” said Simmons. “I’ve seen this organization at its best and its worst. And we’ve always come through because of our members and leaders.”

In closing, Estevenin said: “Sean often refers to our union as his union-family, and I’ve always liked that. While we are going in different directions, you always have a home here.” ■

**“It’s been a privilege serving you on the Board for all of these years. I’ve seen this organization at its best and its worst. And we’ve always come through because of our members and leaders.”**

Sean Simmons  
PROTEC17 Executive Board Member  
2002-2022

# Thank you Sean!



*Sean Simmons was elected to serve on the PROTEC17 Executive Board in 2002, and has played a pivotal role ever since.*



## Some worker-friendly wins on election day; PROTEC17 ready for 2023 legislative sessions



he 2022 election cycle has ended and PROTEC17-endorsed candidates who won are preparing for the work ahead.

### Washington

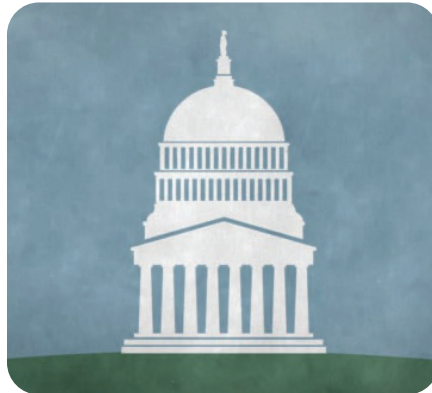
As part of the Political Action Committee (PAC), PROTEC17 members and staff interviewed more than 30 candidates in Washington State seeking our endorsement over several weeks during the summer and fall. The endorsement process included a questionnaire for candidates that was informed by data from last year's political survey, where PROTEC17 members indicated their top political priorities. The data from the survey was also used to develop the standardized questions asked during each interview.

This year, we further aligned our endorsement process with our union's values on racial and gender justice. We made a special effort to reach out to candidates who identify as women or people of color in counties and districts that either have a high population of PROTEC17 members, house an employer where our members work, or where PROTEC17 is an affiliate of the local labor council.

In all, PROTEC17 endorsed 27 candidates. Of those candidates, 46 percent identified as Black, Indigenous, or a person of color, and 70 percent identified as women. For a full list the candidates we endorsed, please visit our website at: [protec17.org/political-action](https://protec17.org/political-action).

Of our endorsed candidates, 18 were ultimately elected. This means that the values of PROTEC17 members will be well reflected in Olympia and various county governments across the state.

Upon winning his reelection campaign with more than 85 percent of the vote, State Senator Joe Nguyen (D-34) had this to say: "Public employees are an integral



part of Washington state. It is an honor to have the support of the people who work hard for families like mine everyday!"

Our union is proud of the member-driven, growing alignment between our work and our values around racial and gender justice. We will continue to prioritize interviewing and supporting candidates from underrepresented communities and backgrounds.

"I've been a member of other unions where I felt disconnected from conversations and decisions that impacted the membership," said Aaron Julyan, PROTEC17 PAC member. "Being invited to participate on the endorsement committee, even as a very new member, was meaningful to me and demonstrated the values PROTEC17 upholds."

As we prepare for the 2023 legislative session, which starts on Jan. 9, we will be reviewing feedback from the 2023-25 strategic planning survey which was open to all members through mid-December. That survey included several questions gauging PROTEC17 members' political priorities. Preliminary data shows the highest priorities for members include: economic relief, increased funding for public health and human services, as well as transportation. Many of our candidates spoke to these issues extensively in their questionnaire and interview responses.

Looking further into 2023, many Seattle City Council members will be up for reelection. As the largest union at the City of Seattle, our goal is to ensure that the voices and values of PROTEC17 members are reflected in the election process. However, to do so, we need your help! If you would like to serve on an upcoming endorsement committee, please reach out to Political Director Brandon Hersey at [brandon@protec17.org](mailto:brandon@protec17.org).

Thank you to all the members and staff who gave their time and made this year's endorsement process a great success!

### Oregon

With the 2023 Oregon legislative session on the horizon, legislators have the opportunity to take substantive action on issues facing Oregonians. This long session, running from mid-January to June, will also bring new leadership in both legislative chambers with Representative Dan Rayfield (Corvallis) and Senator Rob Wagner (Lake Oswego) taking over as Speaker of the House and Senate President, respectively.

In this dynamic situation, PROTEC17 will be closely monitoring developments in Salem and providing input and advocacy when possible. Defending PERS retirement benefits, maintaining guardrails on contracting out of government services, expanding workplace protections, and adequately funding government services remain core priorities.

With online testimony in committee hearings likely to continue, it has never been easier to use your voice to make a difference. If you would like to be involved in our Oregon advocacy work or get updates about the legislative session's impact on labor issues, please email PROTEC17 Oregon Legislative Advocate Elliot Levin at [elliott@protec17.org](mailto:elliott@protec17.org). ■

**Learn more about the upcoming session at: [www.protec17.org/political-action](https://www.protec17.org/political-action)**

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

## New Steward Guide now available!

*PROTEC17 Stewards!*  
*Have you gotten your copy of the newly revised Steward Resource Guide?*

The guide is full of practical advice on your role, rights, and responsibilities when working in your official capacity as a representative of PROTEC17 and contains a plethora of resources to help you help your coworkers.

The guide is available in print AND online! If you're already a Steward, you have likely been invited to join the Steward group in our new online member portal. In that group, you'll find a link to the PDF version of the guide. Plus, the portal offers a space for Stewards across our union to connect, share experiences, and ask questions. Enjoy!



*The new Steward Resource Guide was unveiled at the Regional Executive Committee meeting on Oct. 22. Rachel Whiteside, one of the staff who helped create the new guide, shows off a page highlighting a City of Portland member.*