

insight

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS

OF PROTEC17

Spring
2023
Vol 28
No. 1



#RSPCT for City Workers

SEATTLE ISN'T
JUST FOR TECH
WORKERS - WE ALL
DESERVE AFFORDABILITY
#RSPCTforCityWorkers



**NEW
INSIDE!**

Tear-out page with our spring
events calendar, plus a
PROTEC17 placard!



On the Cover:

PROTEC17 members at the City of Seattle are fighting for #RSPCT in their next contract, alongside their Coalition of City Unions siblings. RSPCT represents their priorities at the bargaining table: Racial equity, Safety, Pay/affordability, Climate justice, and Time/work-life balance. Read more on p. 6. ■

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Congrats!



And a million thank
yous and best wishes
to our long-time
Finance Director,
Jackie Miller, on her
retirement!

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insight

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Karen Estevenin
Executive Director

Spring Energy and Momentum



While doing some research with my middle schooler for a science project, we came upon Hooks Law, a formula originating in 1676 that describes the amount of energy stored in a spring. I couldn't help but see the concepts as an analogy to our work as union members.

Together, by focusing our energy on improving our workplaces and our lives, we build power that helps launch important changes.

That analogy is also vivid when I think about the work that's gone into building our 2023-2025 strategic plan. Thousands of members participated in surveys, Chapter meetings, info sessions, and reflection exercises that were instrumental in plotting our direction for the years ahead. After many months of analysis by the committee tasked with moving this plan forward, the plan and our priorities were presented to the Regional Executive Committee (REC) in February and were unanimously adopted.

These three priorities – 1) creating a strong union identity and culture, 2) building our political power and community connections, and 3) strengthening member leadership programs and opportunities – demonstrate our ongoing commitment to member development within our union and relationship building in our communities that will help improve the lives of working people everywhere. You can read more about our process and priorities on p. 4.

As for releasing the energy we've already built, I immediately think about the escalating efforts and actions of PROTEC17 members at the City of Seattle where members, staff, and Coalition of City Unions partners are mobilizing for a challenging campaign ahead to win a strong contract (p. 6). I also think of the many recent negotiation victories, new delegates, and newly organized groups that we celebrated at our REC meeting (p. 5). Our strong advocacy efforts in the current legislative session are also moving the needle to secure policy changes that will improve pay equity for state members (p. 10).

As we launch forward into these next three years, we will, of course, continue our fight for justice for all working people. As discussed by many in our strategic planning process, as emphasized by the lessons of Black History and Women's History months, and as highlighted by trailblazers in the fight for justice like Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Lucy Parsons, Hattie Canty, Justice Mary Yu, Dr. Camara Jones, and Judith Huemman, this will mean integrating racial and gender equity into each of our priorities and all of our work.

I am excited and energized by our new strategic plan, and I hope you are too. Let's harness the energy and momentum of the season, and spring into the work ahead!

In gratitude and solidarity,

Karen

Scholarship application now open! Deadline 7/31



The annual college scholarship program for dependents of PROTEC17 members is now open! Since its inception in 2011, PROTEC17 has awarded more than 20 scholarships totalling over \$60,000 towards the advanced education of our members' children.

The program sponsors two \$3,000 college scholarships each year – one for an incoming college freshman, and the other for a continuing college student. Applicants are asked to demonstrate their academic achievement, community service, extracurricular activities, and educational goals, as well as write a labor-related essay which is reviewed by outside labor educators.

The application is now available on the PROTEC17 website (www.protec17.org/benefits) – the deadline to apply is July 31, 2023. Winners will be announced in the fall issue of *Insight* magazine, and on our website and social media channels.

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

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

Introducing our 2023-2025 Strategic Planning priorities

Last fall, PROTEC17 began a process to create a new Strategic Plan for 2023-2025 that will guide us over the next three years. As part of that process, thousands of members gave their feedback via a membership-wide survey, Chapter meetings, focus groups, emails, one-on-ones, and more. The Regional Executive Committee (REC) also spent much of the October 2022 meeting brainstorming and providing input for the new plan, as did the PROTEC17 Executive Board.

Since then, the Strategic Planning Committee has been combing through all of this input to form new priorities, goals, and objectives for our union. Several themes emerged during this process, and three priorities rose to the surface. They are: 1) Create a strong union identity and

culture, 2) Build our political power and community connections, and 3) Strengthen member leadership programs and opportunities. Many members expressed their pride in the work that we did in our last strategic plan, and wanted to continue to build on this momentum. It is important to note that within all of these priorities, the committee will continually be looking through a racial justice lens to create goals and objectives under each priority.

The plan was brought to the REC in February and was adopted by the delegate body (read more on next page). The planning committee will now move forward with developing the details of the plan, with measurable goals and outcomes.

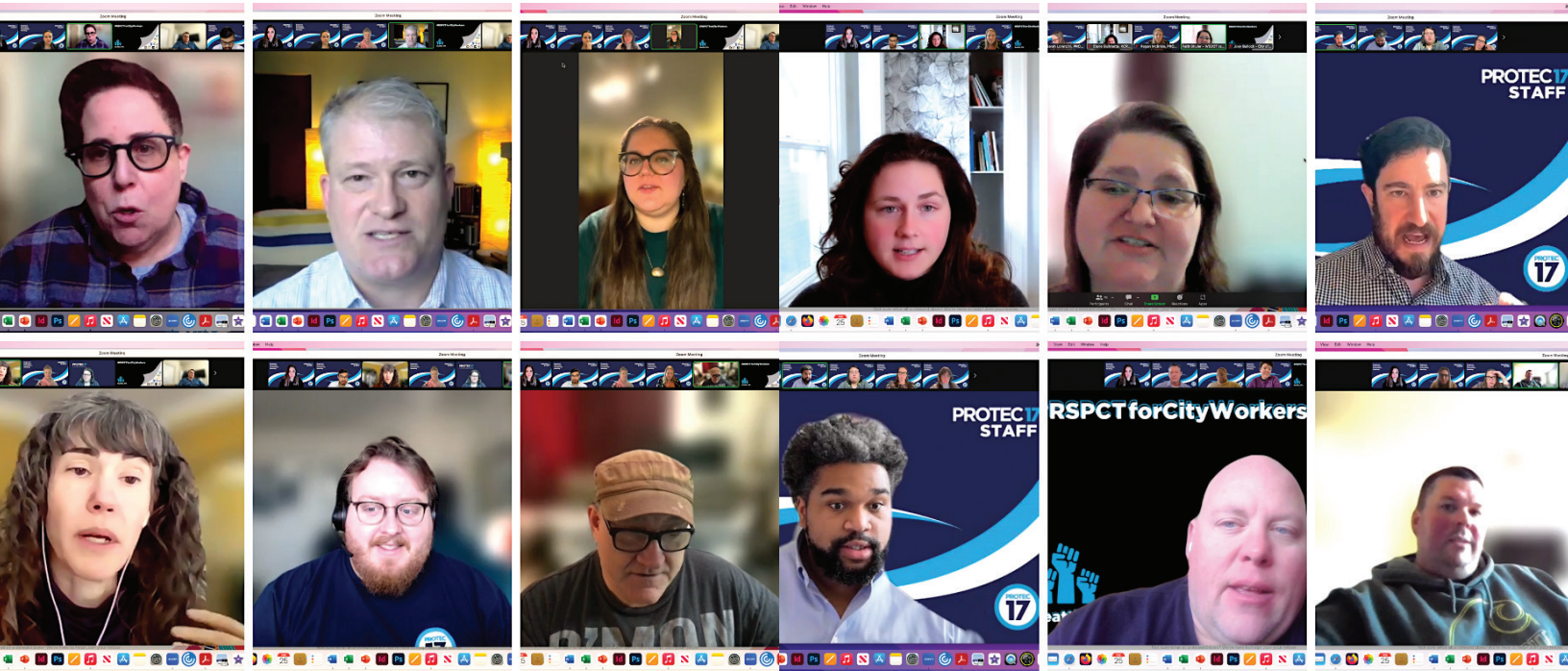
If you have questions or additional input for the committee, please reach out at: future@protec17.org. ■

2023-2025 Strategic Priorities

1. Create a strong union identity and culture
2. Build our political power and community connections
3. Strengthen member leadership programs and opportunities

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

Regional Executive Committee adopts annual budget and 2023-2025 strategic priorities



Above: PROTEC17 members and staff share their union wins and updates at the Feb. 2023 Regional Executive Committee meeting.



n Sat., Feb. 25, the PROTEC17 Regional Executive Committee (REC), our union's policy-making body, convened via

Zoom to conduct the business of our union. At this meeting, delegates reviewed the 2023 budget and 2023-2025 strategic planning priorities, as well as shared important victories in their Chapters that highlight our growing member-powered union.

The meeting opened with a welcome and tribal land acknowledgement by PROTEC17 Executive Board President Rachael Brooks. Executive Board Trustee Renee Thompson reviewed the community agreements for a respectful, productive meeting, then Trustee Emily Tabachnick led the swearing in of new REC delegates. The minutes from the October meeting were then approved by the body.

In her report, Executive Director Karen Estevenin highlighted and celebrated the many wins of the last year and of the 2020-2022 strategic plan. She then introduced the 2023-2025 Strategic Planning Com-

mittee staff - Youssef El Hamawi, Deidre Girard, Brandon Hersey, Steven Pray, Brenna Stroup, and Brent Wagar - and thanked members for their tremendous input and support throughout the planning process, including in the survey and at the last REC meeting where the new priorities began to take shape.

The Strategic Planning Committee discussed the process in more detail and unveiled three draft priorities on which our union will focus over the next three year period, including: 1) Creating a strong union identity and culture, 2) Building our political power and community connections, and 3) Strengthening member leadership programs and opportunities. The REC then voted to adopt these priorities. You can read about them in more detail on the previous page.

Delegates then heard a presentation from Executive Board Secretary-Treasurer Jessica Garcia about the proposed 2023 budget. After a motion to approve and an open discussion, the budget was adopted by the delegation.

In the last hour of the meeting, delegates heard from their fellow members about victories in their Chapters, including new unionization efforts, contract campaign successes, member leader development, and others. Then delegates got to share their own highlights from 2022 in Zoom breakout rooms.

After reconvening in the main room, delegates heard from PROTEC17 Political Director Brandon Hersey and Research Director and Oregon Legislative Advocate Elliot Levin about the priorities and issues that we are supporting in the WA and OR legislatures during the 2023 session. Hersey also discussed several important local races in the upcoming election cycle and opportunities to get involved in PROTEC17 endorsements, as well as the importance of building our Political Action Committee fund to support Labor- and public employee-friendly candidates.

Thank you to all of the REC delegates for a productive and successful meeting, and for all you do for our union! ■

Seattle workers demand RSPCT in their contract

PROTEC17 members at the City of Seattle continue their fight for fairness and dignity in their contract. As part of the contract campaign, members of the Coalition of City Unions (CCU) – led by PROTEC17, the largest union at the City – identified five priorities that spell out the acronym RSPCT: **R**acial equity, **S**afety, **P**ay/affordability, **C**limate justice, and **T**ime/work-life balance. Since negotiations began last fall, the CCU has put forth proposals that align with these priorities.

After more than four months of delay in their economic response, the City finally presented a counterproposal on economics to the CCU on March 1. The insultingly low proposal of a one percent cost of living

adjustment (COLA) for 2023 in a time of skyrocketing inflation has mobilized union members.

With the success of a sticker and virtual background campaign in December, the CCU began circulating an online petition in March to collect as many signatures as possible to deliver to Mayor Bruce Harrell and the Seattle City Council demanding that they provide a fair COLA and contract. The CCU also organized an event for union members to share their stories about why they chose public service, highlighting the talented and dedicated staff that keep the city running. These stories will become even more important as negotiations enters a challenging period.

If you are a Seattle member (or ally!) who hasn't yet signed the petition, you can find it here: bit.ly/RSPCTforCityWorkers.

If you would like to share your public service story, you can find our fillable placards here: bit.ly/RSPCTPublicService.

Please reach out to a bargaining or contract action team member, or your Union Representative if you have questions about contract negotiations. The bargaining team is: Maxwell Branham (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). ■



Connect with your union siblings at: members.protec17.org

PROTEC17 EVENT CALENDAR

Join us!

APRIL 2023

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

MAY 2023

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21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

JUNE 2023

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11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

April 1 - Weekend Steward Training
 April 3 - Communications Series: Hustle
 April 4 - Portland Chapter Meeting
 April 5 - Steward Training Part 1
 April 10 - Communications Series: Member Portal
 April 11 - Union 101
 April 12 - Steward Training Part 2
 April 12 - WSDOT Chapter Meeting
 April 12 - Tacoma Chapter Meeting
 April 13 - Seattle Chapter Meeting
 April 17 - Communications Series: Social Media
 April 19 - Portland Chapter Meeting
 April 20 - King County Steward Meeting
 April 27 - Seattle Steward Meeting
 May 2 - Portland Chapter Meeting
 May 3 - Steward Training Part 1
 May 10 - Steward Training Part 2
 May 10 - WSDOT Chapter Meeting
 May 10 - Tacoma Chapter Meeting
 May 11 - Seattle Chapter Meeting
 May 17 - Portland Chapter Meeting
 May 18 - King County Steward Meeting
 May 24 - King County Chapter Meeting
 May 25 - Seattle Steward Meeting
 June 6 - Portland Chapter Meeting
 June 7 - Steward Training Part 1
 June 8 - Seattle Chapter Meeting
 June 14 - Steward Training Part 2
 June 14 - WSDOT Chapter Meeting
 June 14 - Tacoma Chapter Meeting
 June 15 - King County Steward Meeting
 June 21 - Portland Chapter Meeting
 June 22 - Seattle Steward Meeting

This is not an exhaustive list of events, as things get added all the time! Please visit protec17.org/events for current listings and logistics!

Tear on the dotted line to post this calendar, or the PROTEC17 placard on the other side of this page, in your work station, home office, vehicle, bulletin board, or anywhere you want to show your union pride!



Proud to be **PROTEC17**

Tear along the dotted line, and hang in your cubicle, vehicle, or workspace!

Washington State Supreme Court brings public bargaining to a close in Spokane County

In 2018, after years of secret lobbying from the Freedom Foundation – an anti-union and anti-public employee group – Spokane County Commissioners passed a resolution that would require union negotiations to be done in a public forum, as well as require audio recordings and posting of proposals to the County’s website.

Unions have long believed there are ulterior motives as to why the Freedom Foundation and other anti-union forces push for public bargaining – to intimidate union members, politicize negotiations, and potentially drag out the bargaining process. One of the first resolutions requiring public bargaining in Washington state was passed in Lincoln County back in 2016, without notice to any unions there.

While collective bargaining agreements were already subject to public disclosure in Spokane, and Commissioners were already required to discuss and vote on any tentative agreement at a public meeting before a contract could be officially approved, County Commissioners glossed over these important facts when touting the new public bargaining rules, and they passed the resolution without informing anyone in the nearly twenty unions that represent workers at the County.

For nearly a year, the PROTEC17 Spokane County bargaining team fought back, arguing that ground rules such as the requirement from the employer to negotiate in public must be jointly agreed to by both parties. But in 2019, it became clear the County was not going to budge, and members wanted a new contract, so the bargaining team agreed to the ground rules and entered into public negotiations.

For all of the Freedom Foundation’s and Commissioners’ rhetoric around the public’s burning desire to watch contract negotiations, it was just talk. Despite the County’s public advertisements inviting anyone to attend the meetings, not a sin-



Spokane County Courthouse

gle member of the public or the press ever showed up to a single negotiation session.

When the City of Spokane put a proposition before voters in 2019 asking them to approve a requirement that all collective bargaining occur in public, labor groups in eastern Washington stepped up their fight against public bargaining. Multiple unions filed various unfair labor practices (ULP’s) and lawsuits against employers who implemented a public bargaining requirement. PROTEC17 filed a brief in support of the Washington State Council of County and City Employees, who sued the City of Spokane claiming the Charter amendment requiring open public bargaining was unconstitutional.

Finally, at the end of 2022, that challenge was finally brought before the Washington Supreme Court who ruled unanimously that the City of Spokane could not force unions to negotiate in public. The Supreme Court opinion went even further to say that the Washington “legislature intended collective bargaining to operate in a uniform manner statewide, without

variation from local laws.” This decision effectively squashed any and all local efforts across the State to force unions to negotiate in public for good.

Interestingly, the Spokane County Commission has come under fire recently for their own lax adherence to public meeting rules. Local news organization, Range Media, found that the Commission publishes the least detailed agendas of any of the major local government bodies in eastern Washington, has purposefully restrictive rules for public comment at meetings, and holds the “public” meetings in the middle of the workday, further restricting the ability of the public to view or comment on County business.

Thanks to all of these efforts from our union siblings in the labor movement, Spokane County PROTEC17 members are looking forward to the next round of negotiations without fear of intimidation or interference from the Freedom Foundation or other anti-union figures. ■

PROTEC17 writes and co-sponsors salary survey bill; State of Washington members testify in Olympia

PROTEC17 staff and members from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), the Department of Licensing (DOL), and the Washington State Patrol (WSP) travelled to Olympia – both in-person and virtually – on Feb. 14 to testify for two companion bills that would potentially help achieve better market wages for state members during negotiations.

Because of the Washington State Office of Financial Management’s (OFM) interpretation of the statute governing employee wages (RCW 41.06.152), negotiating over market wage adjustments with the State is a challenge. The State relies almost primarily on retention data to justify any market wage increases, leading to wages in dozens and dozens of job classifications – many of which are occupied by women and Black, Indigenous, and people of color – drastically behind market rates. At the bargaining table, OFM negotiators use the statute as a shield to deny fair and equitable increases and routinely deny arguments for better wages because the turnover doesn’t meet the criteria, as written.

According to the State’s own salary survey – which they do not use due to the statute language – wages in some classifica-

tions are up to 25 percent behind other comparable municipal jobs, and up to 40 percent behind comparable private sector positions.

At WSDOT, managers are currently offering salaries at the top of the wage scale just to get people in the door. Recently, both the Bellevue and Wenatchee WSP Communications Offices (where 911 operators work) were closed due to the agency’s inability to recruit and retain qualified staff.

In an attempt to remedy this hurdle and to get State members the wages they deserve, PROTEC17 crafted language and approached Sen. Sam Hunt, among others, who agreed to be a sponsor for a bill that would allow the State to utilize other metrics when making wage decisions. Other unions representing State workers, including the Washington State Federation of State Employees, and the Washington Public Employees Association also signed on in support.

The resulting bills – House Bill 1774 and Senate Bill 5694 – were heard in their respective committees on Feb. 14, with hundreds of supporters signing in ‘Pro’ through the legislature’s virtual process, and many State employees providing live testimony during the hearings, including PROTEC17

members Brian Brannies (WSDOT), Ruth Daniel (DOL), Daniel Jones (WSDOT), Faith Schuler (WSDOT), and Mindi Mezek, a former member who left her position at WSP due to low wages.

In her testimony, Ruth Daniel said: “The state needs to take a more proactive role in making wage adjustment determinations so we can attract and keep the talented and dedicated employees that the residents of our state deserve.”

Sarah Lorenzini, PROTEC17 Union Representative and Lead Negotiator who testified in support of the Senate bill, said: “This reactive process needs to be reformed to be more in-line with a very competitive market and with the State’s own Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion goals.”

While the bill will likely not make it through to the end of session, a fiscal note has been filed, setting the stage for passage of similar legislation during next year’s budget session.

You can track this and other PROTEC17 legislative priorities on our Political Action page of our website: protec17.org/political-action. You can also reach out to Political Director Brandon Hersey (brandon@protec17.org) if you have questions, or want to help provide testimony in the future. ■

“The state needs to take a more proactive role in making wage adjustment determinations so we can attract and keep the talented and dedicated employees that the residents of our state deserve.”

Ruth Daniel
PROTEC17 member and
DOL Pro-Rate and Fuel Tax Auditor



PROTEC17 DOL member Ruth Daniel testified virtually in support of SB 5694 on Feb. 14.

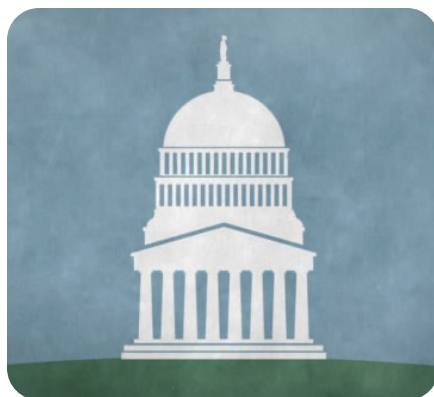
Tracking bills in the 2023 Oregon legislative session

The Oregon legislature is currently meeting until late June for the 2023 session.

PROTEC17 is closely following developments that may impact members, and is providing input on bills and subjects as they arise. Among the bills and issues we're tracking are:

Making safer worksites by increasing employer penalties for safety violations: Senate Bill (SB) 592 would require Oregon OSHA to issue penalties in line with Federal standards for workplace safety violations. Oregon currently has some of the lowest penalties in the country, and this has often resulted in quite small penalties for situations that led to preventable accidents. Additionally, SB 592 would require a comprehensive inspection of a facility if there are three or more incidents within a year.

Lowering barriers to public employees joining a union: House Bill (HB) 2573 would allow for the use of electronic signatures as a showing of interest for union



organizing in the public sector. Currently, organizers must collect physical copies of signed cards from employees, which can be a significant obstacle when working with employees in remote locations, and became especially difficult during the pandemic.

Improving Oregon's mental health care capacity: We are tracking the latest proposals from the governor at the time of publication around increased funding for mental health programs across the state, but particularly as it relates to our newly

organized Portland Street Response members. We hope that this additional funding can help the Portland Street Response both significantly expand and set appropriate wages to recruit the staff that will be required to provide these critical services.

Stabilizing funding for parks:

Oregon statute currently allows for special taxing districts under a limited set of conditions, but this does not permit the creation of a taxing district by cities. HB 3515 would allow voters of Portland to create a special taxing district under the oversight of City Council that would have the authority to raise revenues separately from City funds. PROTEC17 has a strong interest in measures that would stabilize funding for the public services members provide, and we're optimistic that creating special taxing districts may provide this benefit.

If you would like more information about the 2023 session, please contact Oregon Legislative Advocate Elliot Levin (elliott@protec17.org). ■



Three easy ways to become more politically active this year!

- 1. Find your legislators, show your support for worker-friendly legislation, or provide virtual testimony!** In WA, visit: leg.wa.gov; in OR, visit: oregonlegislature.gov.
- 2. Join your fellow members to interview candidates seeking PROTEC17's endorsement!** Reach out to Political Director Brandon Hersey (brandon@protec17.org) to learn more!
- 3. Contribute to the voluntary Political Action Committee (PAC)** Fund at: protec17.org/pac-donation! Remember, no dues money is ever used for political candidates.

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