

# insight

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS

OF PROTEC17

Fall  
2023  
Vol 28  
No. 3







### On the Cover:

City of Seattle workers from across the Coalition of City Unions took to the streets to demand #RSPCT in their next contract! As the largest union in the Coalition, PROTEC17 members showed up in force at the rally at City Hall on Sept. 19, marking one year of contentious negotiations with the City, then marched to Westlake Park. Read more on page 6-7. Photo credit: PROTEC17 member Ashley Harrison. ■

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## insight

Fall 2023  
Vol 28 / No. 3

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## insight

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Karen Estevenin  
Executive Director

## Autumn momentum

**T**his time of year, there is often a noticeable energy in the air – a fresh breeze, cool, crisp air, and a colorful landscape. For my three kids, and perhaps many, it marks the real beginning of the year with the familiar start-of-school momentum. It is a time of activity and preparing, but with a productive, fulfilling rhythm to the hustle.

These past couple of months, PROTEC17 members, like the incredible changing landscape of our autumn season, have also demonstrated a splendid presence in the Pacific Northwest, most notably with our rally for #RSPCT held on September 19. Organized by PROTEC17 and the Coalition of City of Unions, nearly 1,500 union members, community allies, and labor partners congregated on the steps of Seattle City Hall on the one-year anniversary of negotiations to demand a fair contract. The culmination of our strategic planning endeavors over the past four years has shaped us into a union powered by members and a force to be reckoned with (read more on pages 6-7).

Smaller in numbers but equal in their resolve for justice were Chelan-Douglas Health District members in their recent fight for equitable pay increases. Upon learning of a hefty pay raise for the Health District Administrator, and after they were denied market wage adjustments during their negotiations, they voted down their contract tentative agreement. They returned to the table and secured a stronger agreement, which was then voted and approved by members in true solidarity. (Read the full story on page 4.)

People-power is something to celebrate and PROTEC17 recently reached a milestone of 10,000 strong! This signifies more members united in our pursuit of winning strong contracts, improving our jobs, and moving our mission forward to inspire action, advance equity, and build community. Our growth continues, with new members joining each month. You can read more about their motivations for organizing, including those from the City of Seattle's Office of Arts and Culture (page 4), and the Registered Nurses at Yakima Health District (page 5). And if you are interested in learning more about how you can help grow our union, please reach out to our Organizing staff at [join@protec17.org](mailto:join@protec17.org).

Finally, it's election season in Washington, and there are some very important local races. The results of this election could have a significant impact for funding future contracts and jobs. Huge thanks to our member endorsement committee who volunteered many hours to see our process through. Together, we interviewed dozens of candidates, and created a more equitable process to elevate voices from traditionally underrepresented groups to elected offices who will support union members. You can find our recommendations on page 11. And be sure to get your ballot in by Tues., Nov. 7!

The dedication and passion of PROTEC17 members continues to inspire and motivate me every day. Just like the sweeping transformation that autumn brings us each year, I look forward to the new heights we'll reach together through our commitment to justice, compassion for each other, and collective action as working people.

In compassion and solidarity,

*Karen*

## Welcome to new Office of Arts and Culture members



**W**elcome to our newest members from the City of Seattle's Office of Arts and Culture (OAC)! This group of 22 workers fulfills a wide variety of roles, all of which are uniquely designed to foster socially expansive and culturally inclusive creative experience throughout Seattle.

OAC members were certified by the Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC) at the end of August. They decided to organize after initial attempts to change conditions within their workplace were met with limited success. Principal among their concerns were gaining worker protections and having a secure avenue for advocacy.

In his role as Public Art Project Manager, Jeremy Beliveau scopes projects with partner departments, guides the artist selection process, manages artist contracts, and guides public art projects from design to installation. What he loves best about his work is that he gets to work on a variety of projects with all kinds of people, that he's always learning new things, and especially that he is able to bring art to Seattle, the city he loves.

"Being in a union is important because it helps build community and combat alienation," said Beliveau. "Building solidarity nurtures empathy while building an uplifting collective power structure. So many of our world's problems are caused by alienation, manufactured scarcity, and a system that forces us into competition over collaboration. Joining a union is the best first step (in my mind) toward unraveling all that." ■

## CDHD bargaining team secures longevity pay, more after initial no vote on contract

**M**embers of the Chelan-Douglas Health District (CDHD) ratified a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with their employer that will for the first time provide Longevity Pay. In addition, a five percent Supervisory Pay increase will be provided, as well as the seventh step in the pay scale going up to a full five percent. Most importantly, the Health District has agreed to complete a comprehensive salary survey and return to the table next year to discuss market adjustments for many of the CDHC job classifications.

The road to this MOU started in negotiations for the 2023-2025 contract last year. Although cost-of living increases were agreed to, the employer asked to postpone talks about additional market adjustments until they were able to update job descriptions. As it was clear that CDHD was not willing to address the classifications that have salaries below market wages, the Bargaining Team was able to pivot the discussion and get more money into the contract in other ways.

But, four days after a Tentative Agreement was reached, things dramatically changed. That's when the CDHD Board announced a 14 percent pay increase for the CDHD Administrator. While the raise was overdue because he himself hadn't received a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) or wage increase in a couple of years, the optics were terrible. The PROTEC17 Bargaining Team quickly changed their recommendation for ratifying the MOU from 'Yes' to 'Neutral' and the MOU was voted down by the membership.

The Bargaining Team soon returned to the table to negotiate with CDHD. The team was able to secure more money for longevity and to get the important commitment from the employer to conduct a thorough salary survey. The team plans to return to the table next year to have serious conversations about bringing these Public Health job classifications up to fair market levels. Kudos to the CDHD bargaining team and members for a job well done! ■



*PROTEC17 members at Chelan-Douglas Health District at a gathering earlier this summer.*



## Yakima Health District members welcome Public Health Nurses to our union!

**P**ROTEC17 would like to extend a warm welcome to three public health nurses at the Yakima Health District! Nurses Tanya Britt, Alexis Millett, and Kelsey Schindler chose to join forces with PROTEC17-represented Environmental Health specialists in Yakima to increase solidarity and power in their workplace.

The nurses had previously been represented by SEIU 1199NW, but had been experiencing long delays in getting their contract renegotiated after the COVID-19 pandemic. After a few months of discussion, PROTEC17 and SEIU 1199 NW were able to collaboratively make the transition official and certify the new unit with the Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC) earlier this year.

The nurses immediately got to work renegotiating their contract. After weeks of preparatory meetings with PROTEC17 Union Representative Suzie Saunders, negotiations commenced with the Yakima Health District in spring.

Though Britt and Schindler were new to being on a bargaining team, they were able to articulate their issues and concerns to the health district with great success. A tentative agreement was reached that ensured their right to take grievances all the way to arbitration if needed, awarded them shift differential pay for after-hours work, and got them an 8.1 percent general wage increase for 2023. Additionally, they were able to utilize the PROTEC17 Professional Development Fund to help them with the costs associated with their yearly nursing license renewals.

The existing Yakima Health District members immediately welcomed the nurses into their chapter. Chapter



*PROTEC17 members at Yakima Health, including some of our newest who work as nurses on staff.*

leaders began holding quarterly chapter meetings to discuss workplace issues like safety and specialty pay. Nurses brought up a recent incident where they were working in a remote area in their mobile unit, an RV, when an unruly client entered and refused to leave. Though thankfully no one was hurt, this incident left the nurses shaken up and feeling that safety improvements and a policy change were needed. The group was able to work together to advocate for change, and management agreed to a new policy that would keep clients out of the RV, ensuring the safety of those working inside.

Public health nurses and environmental health workers both play a critical role in safeguarding the health and well-being of our communities. By coming together and advocating for their rights and safety, these members have not only improved their working conditions but also enhanced the quality of healthcare services provided to their communities. ■

**“We are excited to welcome our Nurse colleagues into our Chapter and our Union! We value the work they do for our community, and we are proud to stand alongside them to ensure a fair and strong contract.”**

Andrew Rodriguez, PROTEC17 Yakima Health Chapter President

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

# Nearly 1,500 city workers, supporters attend the Rally for #RSPCT at Seattle City Hall



On Tues., Sept. 19, nearly 1,500 city workers, community members, and political leaders rallied on the steps of

Seattle City Hall and then marched along 4th Ave. to Westlake Park in downtown Seattle to mark one year of difficult and contentious contract negotiations with the City of Seattle.

At the Rally for #RSPCT, organized by PROTEC17 and the Coalition of City Unions (CCU), attendees stood in solidarity to demand an equitable contract for city workers with provisions to ensure safe workplaces, and wages that keep up with the cost of living. The CCU represents Seattle city workers from multiple unions, including: PROTEC17, LiUNA/Laborers Local 242, AFSCME Council 2, Local 104, Seattle Dispatchers Guild, Sheet Metal Workers Local 66, IIBEW Local 46, IAM District 160, Teamsters 117, Teamsters 763, IATSE Local 15, Painters/IUPAT District Council 5, IIUOE Local 302, Inlandboatmen's Union, Court Marshal's Guild, and UNITE HERE! Local 8.

**“Seattle’s public servants deserve to earn a wage sufficient to thrive in the city they are dedicated to serving. We work tirelessly to support the essential services of this City and should have the ability to enjoy those same services as residents, not just employees.”**

Rachael Brooks, PROTEC17 Executive Board President, member of the CCU bargaining team, and Engineer at Seattle City Light



Coalition of City Union members cheer at the Rally for #RSPCT on Sept. 19. Many photos courtesy of PROTEC17 member Ashley Harrison. Find more images on our website and social media pages!

Over the course of their year-long contract campaign, the CCU has demanded that the City address their key issues of #RSPCT: Racial Equity, Safety, Pay/affordability, Climate Justice, and Time/work-Life Balance. But at the one-year mark of the start of negotiations, the City and the Coalition remain far apart. The contract expired on Dec. 31, 2022.

Relative to inflation, the cost of living adjustment (COLA) for City of Seattle employees has not kept pace, lagging 5.7 percent between 2015 and 2023 – a relative pay cut. The median income for city workers in the CCU is currently \$75,000, with half – often women and workers of color – earning far below that rate.

For over six months, City negotiators held firm to their offer of a one-percent cost of living adjustment (COLA), which members found insulting given that inflation in the City has reached near double digits. Several members of the CCU bargaining team shared their personal struggles with making ends meet with the crowd.

“To keep up with the cost of living, inflation, and the lack of COLA, I have had to work a second job on the weekends along with my full-time job here at the City,” said Dominique Ingram, who works as an Administrative Specialist at Seattle Municipal Court. “So I’ve worked seven days a week since the pandemic, and the only days off that I’ve had are government holidays.”

City employees have also moved out of the city because they cannot afford to live in Seattle. According to membership data collected by PROTEC17 from the period of 2019 to 2023, 8.7 percent of members who work for the City of Seattle moved outside of the city limits, bringing the total percentage to just 42.9 percent who live in the city they serve.

“As an engineer, my salary and my co-workers’ salaries have fallen so far behind that we cannot fill vacancies because people can get better jobs in the private sector or in better paying municipalities,” said Rachael Brooks, an Engineer at Seattle City Light. “I also recently moved



## RALLY for #RSPCT

to Snohomish County to help my parents, and made the decision to stay because I just can't afford to spend the majority of my salary on rent in the city I love."

In August, union negotiators walked out of a contract bargaining session after City negotiators continually refused to budge from their offer of a one percent COLA, first proposed back in March 2023. In the following session, Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell made an unusual appearance and promised to do better.

"To me, this rally is about shining a light on what we've been experiencing in negotiations," said Cat Hernandez, a 911 operator with the Dispatcher's Guild. "We want the painfully low offers, the slow movement, and the attempts to divide us to be made clear to the public, the city council, and the mayor, so that we can have their support in getting our good faith efforts in this process reciprocated."

Lining the steps and street outside Seattle City Hall, attendees chanted and cheered for a fair contract now, and listened to community and political leaders lend their support to the cause, including Cherika Carter, the Secretary-Treasurer of the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, Katie Garrow, Executive Secretary of MLK Labor, and Ligaya Domingo, President of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA).

Teresa Mosqueda, Seattle City Councilmember, and candidate for King County Council also spoke at the rally: "I am proud to stand with city workers in their fight for a fair contract. They are not only fighting for wages and improved working conditions, they're fighting to ensure the city continues to address our housing crisis, our affordability crisis, our climate crisis. Inflation remains at record highs and middle class families are struggling to make ends meet. They're fighting to ensure that Seattle works for working people."

As the rally came to a close, the crowd peaceably, safely, and spontaneously decided to march to Westlake Park in an unpermitted event that shut down rush hour traffic. At Westlake, attendees heard impromptu speeches and celebrated the successful event.



*PROTEC17 members were a show of force at the Rally for #RSPCT!*

"When Mayor Bruce Harrell attended our bargaining session a few weeks ago, he told the Coalition team to 'rally our asses off,'" said PROTEC17 Executive Director Karen Estevenin. "We sure did! And we know the rally was a success because of turnout, and the energy and solidarity of the crowd. Together, we are organized, and we are powerful."

A huge thank you to PROTEC17 Seattle members, the Coalition of City Unions (CCU) bargaining team, the contract action team, and PROTEC17 staff for turning out, standing strong, and making this event such a success! ■

**"To me, this rally is about shining a light on what we've been experiencing in negotiations. We want the painfully low offers, the slow movement, and the attempts to divide us to be made clear to the public."**

Cat Hernandez, member of the CCU bargaining team and 911 operator with the Dispatcher's Guild

## Meet our 2023 scholarship winners!

**N**ow in its twelfth year, the PROTEC17 scholarship program has awarded over \$65,000 in scholarships to members' dependents to help in their pursuit of a higher education. We are proud to announce that our 2023 scholarship winners are Molly Jenkins and Jacquelyne Nguyen.

Each year, the PROTEC17 scholarship is open to the children, grandchildren or dependents of members as they enter or continue their studies in college or technical school. There are two \$3,000 awards – one for an incoming freshman, and one for a continuing college student. Scholarship applications were accepted through July 31. In the application, students are asked to demonstrate their academic achievements, educational goals, and extracurricular activities. In addition, applicants submit letters of recommendation, and a labor-related essay that is judged by two external labor educators.

This year, we had a record number of applications, which made the decision even more difficult, but two applicants rose to the top.

Molly Jenkins is the child of King County member Michael Jenkins, and is our continuing college student winner. She is currently studying Anthropology and Sustainability at Oregon State University. Entering her junior year, this quarter is packed with four Anthropology courses, plus a Ballroom Dancing elective! Her goal is to work for the National Forest Service or National Parks Service after graduation.

In her scholarship essay, Jenkins reflected on the benefits she's received for having grown up in a union family.

"Seeing what unions can and have done for my family has made me realize that any job, whether they be part-time or full, should unionize," Jenkins said in her application.

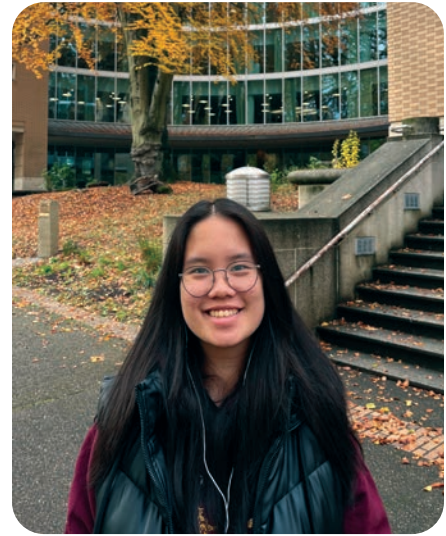


**"This scholarship will help reduce the financial burden of a college education. By having to worry less about the cost, I'll be able spend more time focusing on my classes, research, and clubs."**

Molly Jenkins, PROTEC17 Scholarship Winner, *Continuing College Student*

"In a country where the minimum wage doesn't cover the cost of living for most people, unions are more important than ever."

Jacquelyne Nguyen, child of City of Portland member Daniel (Tri) Nguyen, is entering her freshman year at Portland State University this fall, where she's taking courses on a pre-med track in hopes of one day becoming a pediatrician. To gain experience while in high school, Nguyen spent a summer volunteering in a hospital, and worked as a medical research assistant at Oregon Health Sciences University (OHSU) during her senior year.



**"I want to thank PROTEC17 for supporting me through my college journey. I am sincerely grateful and hope to give back to the community through my future endeavors."**

Jacquelyne Nguyen, PROTEC17 Scholarship Winner, *Graduating High School Senior*

"During my time at university, I hope to continue helping my community and experiencing what medical professionals do every day," said Nguyen in her application. "This means volunteering at local community clinics and hospitals, shadowing physicians to strengthen my exposure, and participating in undergraduate research."

Both students expressed their extreme gratitude to PROTEC17 for supporting this award and for helping them and their families to ease the financial burden of a college education. Thank you to all of our applicants, and best of luck this school year! ■

**To learn about other member benefits, visit: [protec17.org/benefits](https://protec17.org/benefits)**



# PROTEC17 EVENT CALENDAR

## NOVEMBER 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		

## DECEMBER 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
31						

Nov. 1 - Steward Training Part 1

Nov. 7 - Portland Chapter Meeting

Nov. 8 - Steward Training Part 2

Nov. 8 - WSDOT Chapter Meeting

Nov. 8 - Tacoma Chapter Meeting

Nov. 9 - Seattle Chapter Meeting

Nov. 15 - Portland Chapter Meeting

Nov. 16 - King County Steward Meeting

Dec. 5 - Portland Chapter Meeting

Dec. 5 - King County Chapter Meeting

Dec. 7 - Steward Training: Deep Dive on Grievances

Dec. 13 - WSDOT Chapter Meeting

Dec. 13 - Tacoma Chapter Meeting

Dec. 14 - Seattle Chapter Meeting

Dec. 20 - Portland Chapter Meeting

Dec. 21 - King County Steward Meeting

Join us!

This is not an exhaustive list of events, as things get added all the time! Please visit [protec17.org/events](https://protec17.org/events) for current listings and logistics. Or follow us on social media for events, info, fun, and more!



## FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!



[fb.com/protec17](https://fb.com/protec17)



[@PTE17](https://twitter.com/PTE17)



[@WeArePROTEC17](https://www.instagram.com/WeArePROTEC17)



## Life After Work: Writing and remembering the Upstairs Lounge fire

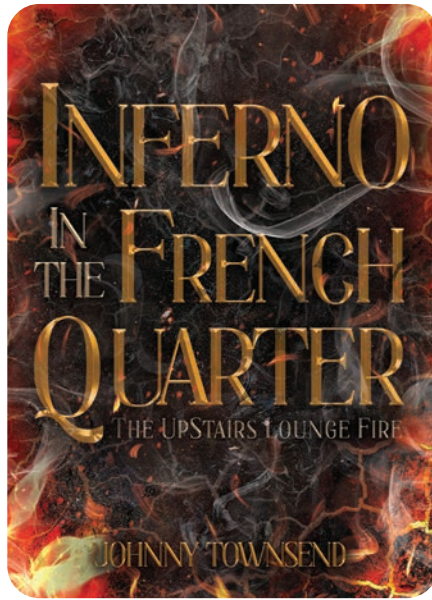
**P**ROTEC17 member Johnny Townsend works as a Customer Service Representative at the City of Seattle by day, but after the workday ends, he is a prolific writer of novels, short stories, and non-fiction. This year, he released an expanded second edition of his 2011 book, called 'Inferno in the French Quarter', which records a tragic and significant arson attack on a gay bar in New Orleans fifty years ago.

For Townsend, who was a child growing up in New Orleans during the time of the fire, the story of The Upstairs Lounge was an important one to tell, both to honor the 32 people who perished in the blaze, but also to highlight the struggles of LGBTQ people then and now.

"When I came out years after the fire and learned the Upstairs Lounge was a gay bar, I wanted to read more about it, but there wasn't anything to read," Townsend recalled.

**"Recording and preserving LGBTQ history has always been important in a society that dismisses us, but with the resurgence of attacks by right-wing leaders...in state after state, it's become more important than ever."**

Johnny Townsend, PROTEC17 Member, City of Seattle employee, and author of 'Inferno in the French Quarter'



*The cover of Johnny Townsend's book, 'Inferno in the French Quarter'.*

In an effort to find out more, Townsend connected with a friend who knew the former owner of the bar, and the owner then connected him with bartender Buddy Rasmussen, who had survived the fire. From there, he met others who were willing to share their stories. Townsend knew he had to record the story before it was lost forever.

In the book, Townsend chronicles the Upstairs Lounge - a safe haven for gay folks in the heart of the Latin Quarter of New Orleans - and many of the patrons who perished on June 24, 1973 while celebrating during Pride month. An arsonist took to igniting the stairs to the second floor bar on fire, trapping dozens of people inside. From a mother who was celebrating with her two gay sons, to a minister, to the father whose sons were waiting at the movie theater for hours to be picked up, the stories are heartbreaking.

But what was more heartbreaking is what happened in the aftermath of the blaze. Churches refused to bury the dead and people refused to claim the bodies of

their family members because of the prejudice and stigma associated with being gay. In newspapers and in neighborhood gossip, horrible jokes were made about the fire. Survivors who had lost friends had to pretend as though nothing had happened for fear of losing their jobs or their families.

Townsend, who was also an associate producer of a documentary about the Upstairs Lounge, was invited to speak at the 50th anniversary memorial of the fire this June. The three-day event took place in New Orleans at a hotel directly across from where the Upstairs Lounge once stood, and included other speakers, performances, a religious service, and a jazz funeral. He was honored to be in attendance and reflected upon the importance of remembering the tragedies of the past so that we may not repeat them.

"Recording LGBTQ history, and then preserving it once it's recorded, has always been important in a society that dismisses us," said Townsend. "But with the resurgence of attacks by right-wing leaders with 'Don't Say Gay' bills and anti-trans legislation in state after state, it's become more important than ever."

Townsend, who describes himself as a climate crisis immigrant, moved to Seattle from New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. A few of Townsend's other books include: 'A Gay Mormon Missionary in Pompeii,' which is a fictionalized account of his two years as a Mormon missionary in Italy; 'Racism by Proxy' - a collection of essays, op-eds, and short memoirs detailing his attempts to recognize biases and make positive choices despite them; and 'Please Evacuate,' a novel about a man who keeps getting caught up in one climate disaster after another, killed each time and then waking up as a different person and trying to prevent the next disaster from happening. ■

**Want to share what you do outside of work? Email: [deidre@protec17.org](mailto:deidre@protec17.org)**

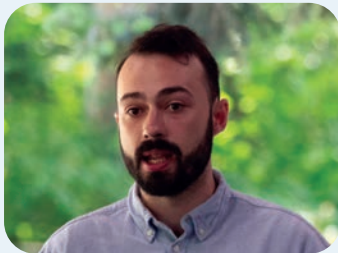


# Your VOTE is your VOICE! VOTE by Nov. 7!



## PROTEC17 2023 Endorsements

### BELLINGHAM



**City Council At-Large**  
Jace Cotton



**District 2**  
Girmay Zahilay



**District 4**  
Jorge Barón



**District 8**  
Teresa Mosqueda

### KING COUNTY COUNCIL

### SEATAC



**City Council Position 7**  
Joe Vinson



**District 1**  
Maren Costa



**District 2**  
Tammy Morales



**District 3**  
Alex Hudson

### SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL

### SPOKANE



**Mayor**  
Lisa Brown



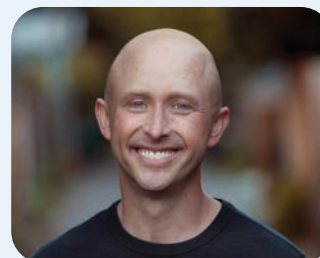
**City Council District 1**  
Lindsey Shaw



**City Council District 2**  
Paul Dillon



**City Council District 3**  
Kitty Klitzke



**District 4**  
Ron Davis



**District 5**  
Cathy Moore



**District 6**  
Dan Strauss



**District 7**  
Andrew Lewis

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# YOUR VOTE HAS POWER

## Who we elect matters – even in a non-presidential election year!

Elected officials make critical decisions that impact city, county, state, federal, and local budgets that in turn have a direct impact on public-sector workers and the programs you support. Many of these officials also vote directly on whether (or not!) to fund our contracts. You can find our list of worker- and public employee- friendly candidates for the upcoming November election on the other side of this page. If you want to get more involved in our political program, please reach out to PROTEC17 Political Director Brandon Hersey at [brandon@protec17.org](mailto:brandon@protec17.org) or 206-328-7321 ext. 112.

**Don't forget to mail in or drop off your ballot  
by Tues., Nov. 7!**