

insight

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS

OF PROTEC17

Winter
2024
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On the Cover:

The King County Chapter's Young Members of PROTEC17 (YMP) group met in December to talk about how they want to reshape the group in 2024. Read more on page 8. ■

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insight

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Karen Estevenin
Executive Director

Celebrating solidarity

Last year was one of tremendous growth, action, and solidarity for our union. And as we have been mobilizing, organizing, and making remarkable progress at PROTEC17, union solidarity has also been a national theme. High profile strikes resulting in big wins – like those for auto workers', screen writers', and actors' unions – have been inspiring, while a surge of national organizing with corporate giants like Amazon and Starbucks are a refreshing trend. As we begin a new year, it is a good time to celebrate and amplify the engagement of working people in our newly invigorated Labor Movement.

Simultaneously, while these victories were taking place, much of our world in 2023 was experiencing tremendous suffering and heartache. The war in Ukraine continues, fossil fuel emissions rise with 2023 reported as the hottest year in recorded history, and we are grappling with the devastating violence, occupation, and ongoing fighting in occupied Palestine and Israel.

How can we celebrate our solidarity and victories when there is so much suffering? I struggle with this conundrum and realized in conversations with friends and colleagues, that many others were struggling, too. Towards the end of 2023, I finished reading an excellent book — *The Book of Joy – Lasting Happiness in a Changing World* by his Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. In this book, they share that joy and suffering are inseparable, and that while we navigate and grieve the pain and suffering in our lives near or far, it is also necessary to recognize and celebrate all there is to celebrate.

And within our union, there are many things to celebrate. We had record numbers of members and leaders participate in trainings, grew our union to over 10,000 workers, and organized many new members (p. 7). Through increased member engagement at the City of Seattle and the efforts of numerous member-leaders, we won an incredible tentative agreement with the City of Seattle (p. 6). New PROTEC17 members at the Port of Seattle and the King County Regional Homelessness Authority ratified their first contracts with significant workplace improvements (p. 4). They are now excited to enjoy all the hard-work they've put into forming a union to continue to build solidarity. These stories and others demonstrate that when we wield power through collective action to make change it is uplifting, invigorating, and contagious – like the front cover demonstrates with the Young Members of King County group, re-energized and reconvening to connect and uplift the voices of young union members.

Whether you've welcomed new members to PROTEC17, advocated in your workplace as a Steward, negotiated your union contract, recruited new leaders, or communicated to your colleagues about our union and your rights, your efforts and leadership are vital to building a strong, resilient, powerful, and joyful union. Thank you for everything you do.

Please take time to celebrate all the moments of joy, and we'll fight together through the struggles. I look forward to working alongside you in the coming year to continue to build our member-powered union.

In compassion and solidarity,

Karen

PROTEC17 team helps all employees at Snohomish County get more vacation

Last year, when Snohomish Health District was absorbed into Snohomish County, PROTEC17 members were able to negotiate the terms of their new contract with their new employer. They wanted to carry over the hard-fought benefits that they enjoyed at the Health District, as well as strengthen their contract even more.

In the new contract, PROTEC17 members were able to secure vacation accrual rates above what the County had offered its employees. This included a bump in accrual rates for members in their first two years of employment with the County, and those with over 22 years of service, as well as a general increase in the maximum annual accrual amount from 240 hours to 320 hours.

In October, Snohomish County amended its code to update its vacation accrual schedule for all employees based on the wins in the PROTEC17 contracts. Now, 2,800 employees at Snohomish County will now benefit from more vacation time!

"It's pretty exciting to see a chapter of 100 PROTEC17 members pave the way for an increased benefit for almost 3,000 workers," said Steven Pray, PROTEC17 Union Representative for Snohomish County.

The changes went into effect starting in November, so applicable employees will see increased rates of accrual. The higher cap on vacation was also effective for 2023.

This win shows that the rising tide does indeed lift all boats. Thank you to the bargaining team for their strong work that helped give everyone at Snohomish County more work-life balance, more time to spend with their families, and more time to be able to do the things they enjoy! ■

Port of Seattle members reach tentative agreement on first contract

After two long years of negotiations, PROTEC17's Airport Duty Managers (ADMs) at the Port of Seattle have reached a tentative agreement (TA) on their first contract!

The group of 15 employees who work at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport contacted PROTEC17 back in 2021 to express their interest

in organizing. Among their top concerns were scheduling and establishing a pay scale that would serve both as a recruitment and retention tool, but also provide some consistency with their pay. Now, with their new TA, they have achieved just that!

The agreement establishes a wage scale that will attract and keep top talent. ADMs will also receive backpay adding up to 8% and 6% increases in 2022 and 2023 respectively, and will be placed on the new wage scale in May of this year. They were also able to solidify 'Awarded Time' – a type of



Port of Seattle Airport Duty Managers Sariah Adviento and Tanner McBride.

compensatory time for salaried employees – as well as language that allows for partial-day absences without loss of pay.

The group used Interest-Based Bargaining in coordination with the Public Employee Relations Commission to establish a scheduling pilot program – components of which have already been implemented.

Of course, the

most important win of this new contract is that ADMs now have a voice on the job – with 'Just Cause' language, and a robust Grievance process to ensure fair treatment embedded in the contract.

The ADMs will be voting in January. You can find out the latest at protec17.org/member/port-of-seattle. If you have questions about the TA or the voting process, please reach out to PROTEC17 Union Representative Sarah Lorenzini at sarah@protec17.org or 206-328-7321 ext. 110. Congratulations Port of Seattle members! ■

KCRHA members ratify new contract

After more than a year of negotiations, employees at the King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA) have unanimously approved the tentative agreement on their first contract!

While the negotiations process officially began in September of 2022, PROTEC17 had to file an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) in early 2023 to get leadership to bring in outside expertise to begin bargaining in earnest. Part of the issue was that KCRHA faced multiple internal organizational challenges throughout negotiations.

Despite the delays, the PROTEC17 bargaining teams – representing two units and a total 61 employees – stood firm and won a fair first contract that provides 'Just Cause' language, guaranteed wage increases, and enforceable language to hold management accountable. Plus, workers will now have a unified voice on the job.

Congratulations KCRHA members! You can find more information on our website at: protec17.org/member/KCRHA or contact PROTEC17 Union Representative Regan McBride at regan@protec17.org or 206-328-7321 ext. 107. ■

Fall Regional Executive Committee meeting celebrates members and our union's accomplishments



On Sat., Oct. 21, the PROTEC17 Regional Executive Committee (REC) – our union's policy-making body

– convened in-person at the Museum of Flight in Tukwila, WA to conduct the business of our union and to celebrate member-leaders. As part of the twice-yearly event, the fall REC meeting highlights our union's accomplishments and victories for the year, and celebrates member-leaders with our annual leadership awards.

The meeting opened with a welcome by PROTEC17 President Rachael Brooks and a tribal land acknowledgement from Yvette Perrantes of the Duwamish Tribe. After hearing about new members who've recently joined our union through recent organizing efforts, the body approved the creation of a new Chapter for members at the City of Mount Vernon – a brand-new employer for our union. Delegates also heard a year-end budget review from Executive Board Secretary-Treasurer Mason Emrys.

The theme of this fall's meeting was 'Sky's The Limit' – a positive representation of the growth and direction of our union. Delegates heard a 'state-of-the-union' update from Executive Director Karen Estevenin that emphasized our successes in 2023, which marked the first year of our 2023-2025 Strategic Plan. As part of the plan, our three priorities include: creating a strong union identity and culture, building our political power and community connections, and strengthening member leadership programs and opportunities. Delegates were also able to provide additional input on many objectives for 2024 via flipcharts posted around the room which are being reviewed by the Strategic Planning Committee.



PROTEC17 Executive Board and award winners at the Fall 2023 REC meeting.

"Our union is on a great path - we are building power and making waves in our region," said Executive Director Estevenin. "Because of our strong leaders and our strategic plan, I have no doubt we will continue to grow our strength in the coming years."

After a short break, delegates participated in an interactive training on the importance of welcoming new members to our union, where they shared tips and tricks with each other, and heard from fellow PROTEC17 leaders who are taking the lead on these initiatives in their workplaces.

For the past several years, the fall REC meeting has also included the presentation of awards that recognize members for their important contributions to building worker power. This year's winners include: Brian Taubeneck (Organizer Extraordinaire, City of Seattle), Clarissa Thompson (For the People – Advocacy, King County), Rachel Freeman (Doesn't Need Coffee - Activist, City of Seattle), Nick Keolker (Union Through and Through, King County), Laura Westervelt

(Rising Star – New Leader, Kitsap Public Health), and Aaron Julyan (Building for Power, King County).

In addition, the first awardee of the Sean Simmons Award for Leadership Commitment went to Steve Morgans from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Chapter, for his many years of service to his fellow members. This award was named in honor of long-time Executive Board member Sean Simmons last year after he received a much-deserved promotion.

Finally, two retired PROTEC17 Stewards and member leaders from King County Public Health were honored with Gold Cards for their dedication to our union – Larry Brown and Todd Yerkes.

Congrats to all of our winners, and thank you to all of the REC delegates for all you do for our union! The next REC meeting will be held virtually on Sat., March 2, 2024. Delegates should expect to receive more information shortly. ■

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

Seattle members reach a tentative agreement!

After more than a year of negotiations with the City of Seattle, the Coalition of City Unions (CCU), led by PROTEC17, reached a tentative agreement (TA) on the 2023-2026 contract on Dec. 14. Seattle members are expected to vote on the contract in early February.

At times contentious, these negotiations demonstrated the commitment and dedication of the bargaining team and the entire CCU membership to getting a fair and strong contract.

After receiving an offer of a one percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) early in 2023, members mobilized to express their frustration. From delivering a 50-foot petition with over 6,000 signatures in April, to a letter writing campaign to Seattle City Council members in May, to shutting down 4th Avenue during the 'Rally 4 #RSPCT' in September, and holding practice pickets at three locations in November, City workers in the Coalition had a direct and significant impact in moving these negotiations forward.

The tentative agreement (TA) includes a retroactive COLA of five percent for 2023, a 4.5 percent COLA for 2024, and COLAs of a minimum of two percent and a maximum of four percent - depending upon the CPI-W - for 2025 and 2026.

One of the biggest wins in this agreement is securing market wage adjustments for over 170 PROTEC17 classifications that had been deemed under market.

Other wins include: an increase in the boot allowance for applicable classifications, additional pay for swing and graveyard shifts, an increase in overtime meal reimbursement, improved vacation accrual and bereavement leave, the creation of a dependent care task force, improvements to the grievance process and contracting out language, and many others.

Now that a TA has been reached, both the CCU and the City are finalizing all of the documentation in preparation for a vote. If the contract is ratified by members, it will then go to the Seattle City Council for final approval, then retroactive pay will be implemented.

The CCU represents over 6,000 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.

The PROTEC17 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), Aimee Kimball (SCL), Jessica Ray (SFD), Rob Svetz (SDCI), Ariska Thompson (SPU), and Fabienne Zwerling (SPD).

Thank you to the team and all Seattle members for your tenacity over the last year! It was your commitment and dedication that got us to the finish line! You can learn more about the contract on our website at: protec17.org/member/seattle. ■

Below: Coalition of City Union members at a practice picket outside of the Seattle Municipal Tower on Nov. 2.



By the numbers: 2023 Organizing Report

Our union continues to grow stronger!

For the last several years, PROTEC17 has continued to grow our membership, and in 2023 we crested 10,000 represented classifications – the highest number in our history! This growth is the result of a combination of strategic outreach, former members who want to organize their new, non-union positions with us, and direct solicitations from workers who think PROTEC17 is the best fit for themselves and their colleagues.

New PROTEC17 Classifications and Contracts

In 2023, we added over 140 workers in newly-represented classifications and at new employers to our member-powered union. This follows record growth in 2020, 2021, and 2022, that has increased our worker power by close to 1,000 new classifications that have organized into PROTEC17 over the last four years.

While many of our organizing campaigns took place within existing PROTEC17 employers, like the City of Seattle and Yakima Health District, we did welcome 15 new members from the City of Mount Vernon – a new employer for PROTEC17.

Some of our newest groups also bargained their first contract in 2023, including the King County Regional Homelessness Authority and the Port of Seattle (see p.4), who both joined in 2021.

Because of our organizing momentum, we continue to hear from more workers who want to organize in 2024. Hearing from current union members is an effective way to spread the word! If you know of colleagues in non-union positions who want to join PROTEC17 and you want to help, please visit: protec17.org/join-us or reach out to us at join@protec17.org. We love welcoming new members to our union!

Member-Leader Training

In addition to growth organizing efforts, PROTEC17 is continuing to strengthen our union through member-leader development training and programs.

In 2023, we held over 36 leader trainings, and trained over 100 new Stewards through a series of one-hour virtual sessions. Member-leaders also attended other trainings and programs last year with the aim of strengthening our union, including: *Secrets of a Successful Organizer*, hosted by Labor Notes, and a series of racial justice workshops and discussion groups for both BIPOC+ members and white-bodied members.

Both growth organizing and member development continue to be key objectives in our 2023-2025 Strategic Plan. We are well on the path to reaching these goals in 2024 with new organizing campaigns underway, and dozens of

trainings already on the calendar. You can find a list of our upcoming 2024 trainings on page 9, as well as on the PROTEC17 website: protec17.org/events. ■

Over
10,000
PROTEC17
Represented
Workers!

Over
600
members attended
leadership trainings
in 2023

Over
140
positions in new
classifications
organized into
PROTEC17

36
leadership
trainings held
in 2023

Over
100
new stewards
trained

Young members group resurrected at King County

Back in 2019, an affinity group of young PROTEC17 members formed in King County to tackle the issue of engaging and educating younger members, and bringing awareness to the many ways to participate in our union. That group called themselves the ‘Young Members of PROTEC17’ or YMP for short.

The YMP served as a bridge, connecting the experiences of King County’s younger demographic to the Labor landscape. With the workforce undergoing demographic changes, and with union leadership positions largely held by more tenured members, this group provided a space for young members to share insights, discuss challenges, and collectively shape the future of the King County Chapter of PROTEC17.

One of the primary goals of the YMP is to amplify the voices of young union members in advocating for their needs and unique issues, such as addressing the growing number of term-limited temporary (TLT) employment and the challenges of being in that role, as well as promoting diversity within union Stewardship at the County.

Beyond advocacy, the YMP members also got trained as Stewards and participated in contract negotiations as part of

“A group specific to young members... is important because it helps younger members gain tools and confidence that can help them get involved further.”

Kelsey Hopkins, Engineer II and Young Members of PROTEC17, King County Chapter



Young Members of PROTEC17 (YMP) leaders Jessie Hardy, Kelsey Hopkins, Christina Olivares and Lucas Smith met late last year to brainstorm upcoming YMP events for 2024.

the bargaining team. This influx of new leaders helped bridge the gap between tenured union members and those who are just starting their careers. As colleagues saw their peers represented in these union leadership roles, it created a solid support system for young workers as they navigate the complexities of the County.

“For most young members at King County, their current job may be their first ever job and it is often their first time being in a union,” said Kelsey Hopkins, an Engineer II and YMP member at King County.

“A group specific to young members allows them to learn and engage without being expected to be an expert or have all of the answers with folks who all have the same level of experience. It is also important because it helps younger members gain tools and confidence that can help them get involved further.”

Perhaps the most significant impact of the YMP is the sense of community and camaraderie that it has cultivated among

young union members. Through regular meetings, events, and a virtual online ballot party, the group has become a hub for support and friendship. This sense of community has not only strengthened the bond among young members but also has contributed to the overall unity of the King County Chapter.

After a short hiatus during the pandemic, the core members of the YMP – including Jessie Hardy, Hopkins, Christina Olivares, and Lucas Smith (pictured above and on the cover) – recently came together to strategize about how to revitalize the group and what a new iteration of the YMP would look like, especially in a contract negotiations year.

They will be convening a meeting in the new year to introduce themselves and to educate members who have been hired in the last year about PROTEC17. Check our events page at protec17.org/events to find the date and time, or contact King County Union Representative Alex Il for more information at alex@protec17.org or 206-328-7321 ext. 118. ■

To learn more about the YMP, email: alex@protec17.org

PROTEC17 EVENT CALENDAR

January

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	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			

Jan. 17 - Portland Chapter Meeting

Jan. 18 - King County Steward Meeting

Jan. 31 - How to Welcome New Members

Jan. 31 - King County Chapter Meeting

Feb. 6 - Portland Chapter Meeting

Feb. 7 - Steward Training - Part 1

Feb. 8 - Seattle Chapter Meeting

Feb. 13 - Steward Training: Deep Dive on Weingarten Rights

Feb. 14 - Steward Training - Part 2

Feb. 14 - WSDOT Chapter Meeting

Feb. 14 - Tacoma Chapter Meeting

Feb. 15 - King County Steward Meeting

Feb. 21 - Portland Chapter Meeting

March 5 - Portland Chapter Meeting

March 6 - Steward Training - Part 1

March 13 - Steward Training - Part 2

March 13 - WSDOT Chapter Meeting

March 13 - Tacoma Chapter Meeting

March 14 - Seattle Chapter Meeting

March 20 - Steward Training: Deep Dive on Negotiations

March 20 - Portland Chapter Meeting

March 21 - King County Steward Meeting

February

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				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		

March

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					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						

Join us!

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.

STRONGER TOGETHER

In Solidarity! Photo Collage

Macy's Workers Strike - Nov. 2023



Drivers' Union - Oct. 2023

Find more photos on our website at: protec17.org/gallery

Portland Teachers' Strike - Nov. 2023



With Seattle Councilmember
Tammy Morales - Nov. 2023



Our 2024 WA legislative priorities

The Washington State legislative session kicked off on Jan. 8, and runs through March 7. Despite the short session, we have several legislative goals that will help improve the work and lives of PROTEC17 members.

One of our highest priorities is supporting the state salary survey bill – SB 5694 – which would give the Office of Financial Management (OFM) the authority to use the state salary survey during contract negotiations.

In the past, OFM's restrictive interpretation of state law has inhibited its ability to appropriately set wage rates for State employees. As a result, some state employee classifications, including many filed predominantly by women and people of color, are paid drastically below market standards. PROTEC17 has been working with allies in the State Legislature to revise RCW 41.06.152 which would explicitly encourage consideration of salary surveys, pay rates at similar employers, and other factors such as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion goals, that would empower the State to increase wages for critical workers.

Another high priority for PROTEC17 in the legislature would be to pass SB 6060 that would allow the use of digital signatures by public sector unions for the purpose of establishing union recogni-



tion. This is important to improving and streamlining the process for unionizing workers in the public sector who have previously had to rely on gathering physical signatures in their union organizing drives in order to be recognized by the Washington Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC).

Another issue we are following closely is the revision of the one percent cap on property taxes in Washington state - SB 5770. This is important because the money generated from property taxes is used to fund life saving services, such as public health and public safety, which directly impacts the jobs of PROTEC17 members.

Over the many years the cap has been in place, a structural deficit has been created in local government budgets that drastically limits their ability to fully fund critical services. PROTEC17 is advocating

that this revision tie the property tax cap to inflation and population growth factors, with the new cap not exceeding three percent. This change would support local elected officials in better serving their communities by providing basic services like public health, police, fire response, and numerous other critical, and often life saving services. If the legislature does not act during the 2024 session, counties across the state will not be able to sustain these services to keep up with community needs, which leads to negative health outcomes, the degradation of infrastructure, thousands of layoffs, and numerous other adverse impacts for both PROTEC17 members and our communities.

Finally, we continue to focus on transportation funding and infrastructure to support the continued employment and working conditions of PROTEC17 members. We are urging the legislature to invest in a multimodal transportation infrastructure, utilize environmentally conscious building strategies, and take steps toward the electrification of transit fleets and other government vehicles.

If you have any questions about our 2024 political priorities or want to get involved this session, please reach out to PROTEC17 Political Director Brandon Hersey at brandon@protec17.org. ■



Run for office in Portland!



With the change in governance structure approved by voters in 2022, there will be 12 new district-based seats up for election in November of 2024. This represents a historic opportunity for working people to take control of Portland City Council and move our city forward. If you are a resident of Portland who is interested in exploring a run for City Council, we'd be happy to direct you to helpful resources, including the Oregon Labor Candidate School. For more information, please contact PROTEC17's Oregon legislative Advocate Elliot Levin at elliott@protec17.org.

Keep on top of political affairs at: protec17.org/political-action

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2024 Professional Development Funds *NOW AVAILABLE!*

The PROTEC17 Professional Development Fund is designed to encourage and support the ongoing education and professional development of our members. Each year, members can apply for awards of up to \$200 for job-related, continuing education opportunities that are not covered by their employer or another party. Awards are available on a first-come, first-served basis until the funds are depleted. All eligible, dues-paying members are welcome to apply!

Questions? Please contact Deidre Girard, PROTEC17 Communications Director at 206-328-7321 ext. 130 or deidre@protec17.org.

Learn more at: protec17.org/benefits