

insight

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS

OF PROTEC17

Winter
2025
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No. 1



Join the **PROTEC17 Workers' Roundtable!**



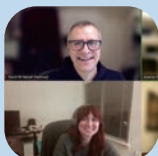
On the Cover:

The PROTEC17 Workers' Roundtable (PWR!) has reconvened to push forward pro-worker policy issues at the state and local levels. Join the reenergized group to help make change ahead of the 2025 legislative session! Read more about our political priorities and program on pages 10-11. ■

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insight

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Karen Estevenin
Executive Director

Winter's Invitation

We are in the darkest part of the year. As someone who grew up in the Pacific Northwest, I've learned it's easier to embrace this time of year rather than loathe it. While skiing or enjoying the nearby snow-covered mountains are a big component of the joy of this season, on most days when that isn't an option, I try to view the short, dark days as an invitation for more contemplation, rest, and reflection. As I reflected on this past year - I felt a deep sense of purpose and accomplishment with the campaigns, strategy, and wins we've engaged in together as a union. More importantly, perhaps, is what we carry forward into 2025.

Some of the past year's highlights include our Pride in PROTEC17 campaign, a successful leadership conference, organizing hundreds of new members, engaging State members in a first-ever workplace walk-out to win a strong contract, providing dozens of steward trainings and leadership development opportunities, holding the line in solidarity with other unions and striking workers, and mobilizing public health members from King County to Spokane to support crucial services for our communities. All of these accomplishments - and many more - have provided a solid foundation for bold collective action, strong contract campaigns, and community building into the new year.

This issue of *Insight* highlights several wins that project the direction for another exciting year, such as a new organizing group with the Public Relations specialists at the City of Seattle - indicating that the vibrant organizing energy of 2024 is continuing even stronger into 2025 (p. 8). Members are coming together to discuss and plan for our 'Future of Work' (p. 5). The committee's focus is to develop next steps and long-term strategy for how we can shape the evolution and next phase of work - centering the needs of working people in where and how we work. And 2025 brings us into our final year of our three-year strategic plan (p. 6). We've been true to our priorities and have done tremendous work moving our mission forward, and as we close out this plan, we will begin putting ideas and priorities together for our next strategic plan. We already have an excellent start through gathering ideas, hopes, and priorities from our Regional Executive Committee delegates at our meeting last October (p. 5).

We have a pretty incredible start to the year, and it's enticing to move at full-speed ahead, but the natural world beckons us to come inside a little earlier, hunker down, and be easeful. It doesn't mean we aren't going to work hard and do all the things we have set our sights on, it just invites us to pace ourselves. We have a heck of year ahead of us. We will need our energy, ideas, and plans to come to fruition in the coming months and throughout the year. Darkness invites us to heighten our senses beyond sight, lean into curiosity, and get prepared for the future. Darkness is here to help us pause - to take a moment of reflection for where we've been, where we are now, and where we are going.

In compassion and solidarity,

Karen

King County bargaining kicks off Feb. 6 at Jellyfish Brewing!

PROTEC17 members in the King County Coalition of Unions will begin negotiating with the County shortly for the 2026-2028 contract, as the current contract extension agreement will expire at the end of 2025. To get ready to win a strong contract, the bargaining team is planning a fun kick-off event on *Thurs., Feb. 6 at 5:30 p.m. at Jellyfish Brewing* (917 S. Nebraska St., Seattle, WA 98108).

At the event, members can meet the team representing them at the table, and get together with members from across the County who are ready to take action over the next several months to secure big wins!

As a reminder, PROTEC17 bargains in solidarity and in coalition with several other unions at the County in order to get the best deal possible on shared issues, and then participates in “small table” bargaining for PROTEC17-specific issues. However, PROTEC17 Admins, Chiefs, and Superintendants in King County Transit negotiate separately; they have been in negotiations since the fall. All other King County members are covered by the Coalition Labor Agreement (CLA).

KC Coalition members should check their personal email for the latest updates. If you need to update your contact information with us, please do so at: protec17.org/contact-info-update. Questions? Reach out to your Union Representatives, found at: protec17.org/member/king. ■



WA State faces budget shortfall; what this means for PROTEC17 State members

The 2025 Washington State legislative session began on Jan. 13 in the midst of a statewide hiring and spending freeze, and a predicted \$10–12 billion dollar deficit to the general fund - an increase from earlier predictions. The transportation budget is also expected to face about a \$2 billion dollar shortfall.

While PROTEC17 members at the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), the Department of Licensing (DOL), and the Washington State Patrol (WSP) are paid through the general fund, the money is funneled through the transportation fund, which pays for operations at all three of the State agencies we represent. At the time of this printing, we had no indications about how legislators will remedy the deficit, but we know that they may have to make tough decisions during this long session.

Right now, our priority is to ensure all current employees are safe from job reductions, and that our 2025-2027 Collective Bargaining Agreement makes it into the final budget. The contract, ratified by members in late September and included in the Governor’s budget last fall, includes a three percent wage increase beginning July 1, 2025, and a two percent increase the following year, as well as additional market rate adjustments for certain positions, and many improvements to contract language and other benefits. The legislature’s approval is the final step needed to make sure these changes go into effect at the start of the new fiscal year.

PROTEC17 staff and member leaders are already proactively working on steps to mitigate layoffs and other impacts to members and state services, and to make sure legislators understand the importance of funding this contract.

First, we are coordinating with labor and community partners to garner support for state members and their work; and we are already talking to legislators to ensure maintaining a strong workforce in the midst of budget obstacles is a priority.

PROTEC17 also has a seat on incoming-Governor Bob Ferguson’s transportation transition subcommittee to ensure our perspectives and priorities are part of transportation budget considerations moving forward.

Additionally, we maintain a seat – along with representatives from the consulting and contracting industry – as a stakeholder on a group that is mandated by the legislature to advise WSDOT on its business practices. The full report, in which we reiterate our priorities, has been provided to the legislature for their review. You can find a link to it here: wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-12/WSDOT-Construction-Program-Business-Plan-Update-2024.pdf.

State members should keep an eye on their personal email for updates on the State budget and contract, and to be ready if we need to take quick and collective action in Olympia. In years past, PROTEC17 member testimony in the legislature has proved critical in making positive change and moving issues important to State employees forward.

If you have questions about the budget, please reach out to your Union Representative. You can also get more involved in our political program - which includes advocacy at the State and local level on policy issues relevant to PROTEC17 members - by reaching out to our Political Director Mark Watson at mark@protec17.org or 206-328-7321 ext. 133. You can also read more about our 2025 Legislative Priorities on page 11 of this issue. ■

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

Fall Regional Executive Committee meeting celebrates leaders and accomplishments; next meeting March 1

On Sat., Oct. 19, the PROTEC17 Regional Executive Committee (REC) — our union’s policy-making body — convened in-person at the Northwest African American Museum to conduct the business of our union. 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 and tribal land acknowledgement by PROTEC17 President Rachael Brooks. Delegates also heard a year-end budget review from Executive Board Secretary-Treasurer Mason Emrys.

The theme of this fall’s meeting was ‘Healing & Hope’ — representing the work we’ve been doing as a union to become an anti-racist organization. Delegates heard a ‘state-of-the-union’ update from Executive Director Karen Estevenin that emphasized

our many successes in 2024, including hosting our first ever ‘Solidarity Summit’ for leaders; member actions that moved the dial at the State, Snohomish County, Spokane Health and more; organizing over 200 new workers into our union, including campaigns at a new employer - Sound Transit; and launching our popular ‘Proud to Be PROTEC17’ video, among many other accomplishments.

“We are continuing to build power in our union and people are taking notice,” said Executive Director Estevenin. “Because of you, our fearless leaders, I know that we will reach great heights. I am inspired by your passion and dedication everyday.”

After a short break, delegates participated in an interactive training on leadership and building pride in union membership. Leaders broke into small groups to discuss how to keep members engaged and inspired, and what they want to accomplish in the year ahead. As part of

the exercise, delegates also had their pictures taken in our photo booth and submitted quotes to continue to build upon our ‘Proud to Be PROTEC17’ campaign.

The fall REC meeting also includes the presentation of awards that recognize members for their important contributions to building worker power. This year’s winners include: Mindy Mezek and Tristan Cody (Organizer Extraordinaire, Sound Transit), Kelsey Hopkins (For the People — Advocacy, King County), John Persak (Doesn’t Need Coffee - Activist, City of Seattle), Geoff Smith (Union Through and Through, Port of Seattle), Sayward Glise (Rising Star - New Leader, King County), and Drew Nazarian (Building for Power, Snohomish County).

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 1, 2025. Delegates should expect to receive more information shortly. ■



PROTEC17 staff, REC delegates, and guests assembled at the Northwest African America Museum in October to conduct the business of our union.

PROTEC17 2023-2025 Strategic Plan in its final year; priorities and objectives continue to move forward

Last year, PROTEC17 members took brave, bold action to continue moving our mission forward, and we were able to accomplish a lot of the objectives in our 2023-2025 Strategic Plan. From big wins at the bargaining table and dozens of organizing victories, to engaging in meaningful collaboration on big picture issues impacting our communities, our union is taking the lead on building a new kind of worker-powered world.

The 2023-2025 Strategic Plan has been focused on three main priorities: creating a strong union identity and culture; building our political power and community connections; and strengthening member leadership programs and opportunities. As part of the plan, we held our first ever ‘Solidarity Summit’ where over 100 PROTEC17 leaders from across the PNW came together to connect and collaborate

as we dream about what our union can be. We continue to grow, and have welcomed new members from Sound Transit to our union this year. We also launched our ‘Proud to Be PROTEC17’ video and campaign highlighting the amazing work that PROTEC17 members do for our communities as public service workers. And our political program grew exponentially this year, with dozens of members interviewing and endorsing numerous pro-worker candidates across Washington and Oregon. If you’re interested in joining these efforts, check out the PROTEC17 Workers’ Roundtable (featured on our cover and p. 10) to help us with the upcoming legislative session!

We continue to build partnerships with Labor, legislators, and community to take action on a variety of issues. In 2025, State members will need to work with the legislature to ensure state jobs and services are

preserved as Washington faces an incredible budget deficit (p. 4). In King County, our coalition will continue to advocate for stable and permanent funding for Public Health clinics.

While we will still be working on the remainder of this plan’s goals and objectives in 2025, in the second half of the year, we will begin to look ahead to the 2026-2028 Strategic Plan. This summer, you can expect to see an extensive survey whose results will help shape our priorities for the next three years. We will also gather input and feedback in various other ways. Please keep your eyes peeled for more information on these efforts later in the year. And, as always, if you have additional ideas, information, or feedback on our priorities as we strive to reach our newest goals, you can reach out to the Strategic Planning Committee at future@protec17.org. ■

“We have made tremendous progress on our three priorities over the last two years of our strategic plan. I am excited for the year ahead - to keep moving our plan forward, and to start thinking about what’s ahead for 2026-2028.”

Karen Estevenin
PROTEC17 Executive Director

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

Have input for our next plan? Email: future@protec17.org

Future of Work is Us

Member committee makes a plan, progress in 2024

In the second half of 2024, PROTEC17 launched a new cross-chapter committee to act collectively in shaping the future of our work. From navigating return-to-office mandates and improvements for in-office work in the short-term, to thinking creatively about how the workplace will evolve over the next decade, PROTEC17 members want to have a voice in decisions that impact their lives.

Since last September, a core group of about 100 members from the City of Seattle, King County, King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA), and Sound Transit, have been meeting monthly to strategize about what our union can do to be at the forefront of sweeping changes to the way we work. After gathering survey responses from over 1,700 members, the Future of Work (FoW) Committee is now focusing on five key areas as they make a plan for 2025. Those areas are: research; member action; outreach and communications; disability rights and community organizing; and planning and recommendations.

As the committee looks ahead, they are also celebrating several wins that happened before the end of last year, including: the postponement of the three-day in-office minimum requirement at the City of Seattle to from Nov. 4, 2024 to Jan. 2, 2025, and the ratification of a union contract that contains historic flexibility for remote work for PROTEC17 members at the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). In addition, staff and members at King County, KCRHA, and Sound Transit have been pushing employers to collaborate on forthcoming return-to-office plans.

While the committee began with members in the four chapters listed above as they battled immediate return-to-office mandates last year, the group is open to all PROTEC17 members. It is also not limited

to those working remotely. The idea is to explore what the future of work might look like for members who currently don't have the ability to work remotely, as well as for those who work out in the field or on a hybrid schedule, in order to think creatively about how we can add more flexibility, additional benefits, and incentives to mandatory in-office and field work.

To gain more visibility, this winter, the FoW Committee will be rolling out a story collection campaign to gather quotes, photos, and videos about what the ideal work

environment of the future looks like to PROTEC17 members. The committee has chosen the theme "The Future of Work is Us" for the campaign. If you'd like to share your thoughts, use the QR code below or this link: forms.gle/ePLsTXXKWXUHGG9b7.

If you are interested in joining the committee, please reach out to PROTEC17 Membership Organizing Coordinator Brenna Stroup at brenna@protec17.org. Meetings are held every first Thursday at 12 p.m. via Zoom at tinyurl.com/protec17-future-of-work. ■

THE FUTURE OF WORK IS US >>>

What does the future of work look like to you?

Use the QR code to share your story!

Whether you work in the office full-time, work fully remote, or somewhere in between, join your fellow PROTEC17 leaders to discuss how, **together, we can help shape what our workplaces of the future look like.**

FIRST THURS. OF THE MONTH
12-1 P.M.
VIA ZOOM
REGISTER HERE: [TINYURL.COM/PROTEC17-FUTURE-OF-WORK](https://tinyurl.com/protec17-future-of-work)

Questions?
 Contact PROTEC17 Membership Organizing Coordinator Brenna Stroup at brenna@protec17.org

PROTEC17

Public Relations Specialists in Seattle join PROTEC17!

M meet our newest PROTEC17 members! Public Relations (PR) Specialists at the City of Seattle were certified in early 2025 by the Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC), and will be accreted into the Professional unit of our main contract with the city, securing their union rights and benefits. The group of 42 PR Specialists work across most departments ensuring that internal and external city communications are professional and user-friendly.

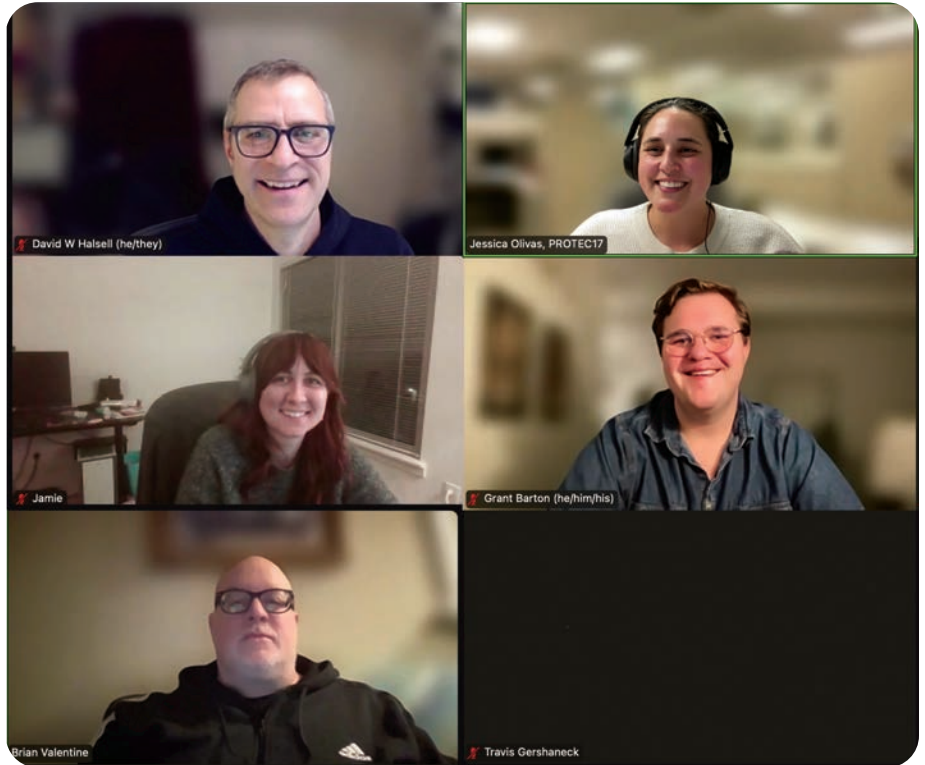
Back in late 2023, a core group of specialists reached out to PROTEC17. Despite not having a majority of their colleagues on board at that time, the group pressed on and made incremental progress over the last year. Then, last fall, some creative thinking and solutions helped the group reach a critical mass, which continues to rise.

The main reasons that the PR Specialists wanted to organize was for equal treatment with their unionized colleagues, a seat at the table in decisions made about their work, and to have representation on the job.

For Shanna Christie, a 20-year City employee and PR Specialist in the Seattle Department of Transportation who has worked

“My job is to take down the barriers between the details of what government does, and make it clear to the public what work is being done and how to access services. I always find that really satisfying.”

Shanna Christie
Public Relations Specialist
City of Seattle



Public Relations specialists at the City of Seattle officially joined PROTEC17 in early 2025.

in both union and non-union positions, the difference is the security.

“It feels more secure to know that someone has my back and like I have a voice in the decisions that impact my life as an employee,” said Christie.

PR Specialist David Halsell, who helps update and manage the websites for Seattle Public Utilities, among other digital communications technical support tasks, likes that their job helps to provide the essential services that Seattle residents need.

“I feel like I am making a more positive contribution to society than helping someone sell [a product],” Halsell said.

Christie agrees: “When you work for the City, you aren’t trying to sell someone a product they don’t need, instead you are providing basic services that impact people’s daily lives.”

While PR Specialists at the City perform a wide range of communications job duties

depending upon the needs of their different departments, according to Halsell, they have created a supportive network of talented and creative communications professionals across the city.

While expressing gratitude that the City is generally a good employer, Halsell spoke more broadly to the importance and significance of unionizing:

“Workers should always have a seat at the table and a voice in the workplace. Historically, unions have been a bulwark against fascism and the dominance of corporations, and we are again faced with these struggles in our society. By building union membership, we build solidarity and strength.”

Thanks to the dedication and tenacity of our newest PR Specialist members at the City of Seattle, PROTEC17 continues to grow stronger! ■

To learn more about union organizing, visit: protec17.org/join-us

PROTEC17 EVENT CALENDAR

JANUARY 2025						
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
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26	27	28	29	30	31	

FEBRUARY 2025						
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23	24	25	26	27	28	

MARCH 2025						
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9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

- Jan. 13 - Member Training: How to Welcome Your Fellow Union Members Effectively
- Jan. 15 - Steward Training - Part 2
- Jan. 15 - Portland Chapter Meeting
- Jan. 16 - King County Coalition Contract Action Team Meeting
- Jan. 17 - Future of Work Member Action Meeting
- Jan. 20 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Jan. 21 - Benton-Franklin Chapter Meeting
- Jan. 22 - King County Chapter Meeting
- Jan. 23 - Seattle Steward Meeting
- Feb. 4 - Portland Chapter Meeting
- Feb. 5 - Steward Training - Part 1
- Feb. 6 - Future of Work Member Action Meeting
- Feb. 12 - Steward Training - Part 2
- Feb. 12 - WSDOT Chapter Meeting
- Feb. 12 - Tacoma Chapter Meeting
- Feb. 13 - Seattle Chapter Meeting
- Feb. 19 - Portland Chapter Meeting
- Feb. 18 - Benton-Franklin Chapter Meeting
- Feb. 19 - Steward Training: Deep-Dive on Grievances
- Feb. 20 - King County Coalition Contract Action Team Meeting
- Feb. 26 - King County Chapter Meeting
- Feb. 27 - Seattle Steward Meeting
- March 4 - Portland Chapter Meeting
- March 5 - Steward Training - Part 1
- March 5 - DOL Revenue Auditors Meeting
- March 6 - Future of Work Member Action Meeting
- March 12 - Steward Training - Part 2
- March 12 - WSDOT Chapter Meeting
- March 12 - Tacoma Chapter Meeting
- March 13 - Seattle Chapter Meeting
- March 18 - Benton-Franklin Chapter Meeting
- March 19 - Portland Chapter Meeting
- March 20 - King County Coalition Contract Action Team Meeting
- March 26 - King County Chapter Meeting
- March 27 - 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.

Seattle Residents!

VOTE 'YES!' for Social Housing on February ballot

Seattle residents will be voting on Tues., Feb. 11 on an initiative to support Social Housing. If you are a PROTEC17 member who lives in Seattle, we strongly support a 'YES' vote on Proposition 1A! Back in 2023, voters passed Initiative 135 in support of social housing, and this 2025 proposition will create the funding mechanism for the new program.

What is Social Housing?

The Seattle Social Housing Developer (SSHD) is a not-for-profit development authority focused on addressing the city's housing needs through innovative solutions that bring together people of mixed income levels, with a particular focus on those who are being priced out of the city.

The SSHD envisions their housing communities will be home to low- and moderate income families, seniors living on fixed incomes, individuals with disabilities, and people working in professions that do not earn enough to afford market rents



– including public service workers like PROTEC17 members, teachers, bus drivers, day care workers, etc. – as well as higher-income households who value living in an income diverse community.

The SSHD will develop properties that are publicly owned with stable, affordable rates that are governed, in part, by the renters themselves. The goal is to foster thriving, sustainable communities where people choose to live long term and build strong neighbor relationships. In addition, the development is designed to adhere to the highest environmental standards and practices.

How will the SSHD be funded?

The funding mechanism for the SSHD comes from a tax on our city's wealthiest

employers who will pay a 5% payroll tax on salaries over one million dollars annually, generating an estimated \$50 million. Once the SSHD is established, social housing is designed to be financially sustainable. For construction, it often relies on traditional short term funding sources such as construction loans and/or government bonds. Ongoing operating costs and the long term "mortgage" is paid by the rents, i.e. the full spectrum of rents combine to pay all operating expenses, debt payment and reserves for future repairs and replacements. Additionally, contributions from government or philanthropy can be incorporated to improve affordability.

If you would like more information about social housing, the SSHD, and Prop 1A, you can visit their website at socialhousingseattle.org or please feel free to contact PROTEC17 Political Director Mark Watson, at mark@protec17.org or 800-783-0017 ext. 133. ■

JOIN PWR PROTEC17 WORKERS ROUNDTABLE!

We are a group of PROTEC17 members from across WA and OR who help make change at the policy level - and we have fun doing it! Visit our website or contact Political Director Mark Watson at mark@protec17.org or 206-328-7321 ext. 133 to learn more!



protec17.org/pwr

2025 Legislative Priorities in WA and OR



The 2025 Washington and Oregon legislative sessions began in January, and we have several priorities in each state that will help improve the work and lives of PROTEC17 members and their families.

Washington

In Washington, the session runs through April 27, and one of our top priorities includes ensuring that the contract for PROTEC17 State members is fully funded and layoffs are avoided as the legislature looks to close a \$10 billion budget gap (read more on p. 4). We will also be working with legislators on a continued project to allow the State's salary survey to be used in contract bargaining - a loophole that has hamstrung negotiations in the last several cycles.

Ongoing efforts to support permanent and secure funding for our Public Health system that maintains clinics, services, and union-represented jobs is also a top priority. Last year, the legislature approved a funding mechanism through Harborview Medical Center that will temporarily fund Public Health clinics in King County for the next few years, however, the move falls short of a solution for the chronically underfunded, but critically-needed, system.

Other efforts in the legislature this session include removing the one percent cap on property tax and supporting a wealth tax to fill the \$10 billion budget hole. Since 2007, the one percent property tax cap has created a structural deficit for local governments, severely limiting their ability to provide critical public services, including public health, public safety, and infrastructure maintenance.

We continue to work with legislators on funding for critical infrastructure and transportation projects that address climate change while protecting workers'



rights and the rights of all Washington residents to safe roads, bridges and transportation choices. By prioritizing environmentally responsible infrastructure projects, we can mitigate climate impacts, enhance public transit, and create high-quality union jobs.

This year also marks the transition to new leadership under incoming Governor Bob Ferguson, and a key priority is to continue building a strong relationship with the new administration.

We will likely need PROTEC17 members to provide comment and testimony this session as bills are introduced so that we can demonstrate the critical need for support. This can often be done online, remotely, or by going down to Olympia directly. If you have questions or are interested in sharing your expertise in your field and work, please contact our new Political Director, Mark Watson at mark@protec17.org.

Oregon

On January 21, the Oregon legislature began its long session, which will last until the end of June. With strong Democratic majorities in both the House and Senate we are optimistic for a productive session and seeing progress for working people across the state. This is a budget year, so revenue and spending will be a major part of legislative conversations, as well as the

continued focus on education and housing. Along with these major issues, PROTEC17 will be closely tracking a number of bills and subjects that directly impact PROTEC17 members including transportation funding, retirement security, and public employee rights.

The legislature has been working on creating a transportation funding package, and the governor has signaled support for this measure. While most of this funding will be directed to ODOT, we remain interested in making sure that local transportation agencies are supported as well. We will be closely tracking the progress of this package through the legislature as it will have a direct impact on our Portland Bureau of Transportation members.

Several concepts are being discussed in regards to the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS), including improvements in how overtime pay is used to calculate PERS benefits, adjusting PERS lookback periods, and aligning PERS disability with workers' comp. Importantly, we do not expect any attempts to cut PERS benefits during this session.

Additional subjects being discussed that impact working families include workplace age discrimination protections, defending the Oregon Pay Equity Act, unemployment insurance for striking workers, Artificial intelligence, workplace surveillance and technology regulations, and paid family medical leave fixes.

We will continue tracking developments in the legislature throughout session and will send information and opportunities to engage as the year unfolds. If you are interested in such opportunities, please contact PROTEC17's Research Director and Oregon Legislative Advocate Elliot Levin at elliott@protec17.org. ■

**Learn more about our legislative priorities at:
protec17.org/legislative-priorities**

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

Learn more at: protec17.org/benefits