

insight

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS

OF PROTEC17

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On the Cover:

PROTEC17 stands in solidarity with union workers who have been unjustly detained at a rally outside of the Tacoma Detention Center on March 27. This is one of many rallies that have been held since January as we face more and more federal attacks on our communities. Read more on page 4. ■

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insight

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Karen Estevenin
Executive Director

Bringing our full humanity to the struggle

We are experiencing some deeply troubling times. I'm sad and infuriated by the attack on free speech, and the arrest of students, union leaders, and workers taken without due process and thrown into detention. I'm stunned by the cruelty shown towards federal workers - many discovering they had been terminated by the deactivation of their ID badge while entering their workplace. I'm angered that collective bargaining rights have been stripped away from 700,000 federal workers in an instant, and concerned about the ripple effect this has on the future for all union members.

There is immense suffering right now. However, there is also immense resistance and mobilization. I'm inspired by all those speaking out for justice, demonstrating collectively, and building community. And I've been surprised and delighted with the high levels of joy, exuberance, and humor, infused into these gatherings, despite the heaviness of what we're facing. I've realized in attending rallies and marches over the past few weeks that the more fun, the more successful the action seemed to be.

Fun includes creativity and imagination and it is a vital part of our full humanity. PROTEC17 King County bargaining team members understand this as they come up with ideas and creative proposals as they move through the negotiations process - both as individual units and as part of the Coalition Labor Agreement (p.4). New members at Sound Transit understand the importance of imagination as they form their union with PROTEC17 (p. 6-7). For many months now, they have been sharing their vision of an improved (union!) workplace - one where their voice is heard, and collectively they can create a more welcoming, safe, and desirable place to work. Members at Clark County won significant wage increases through their recent contract and a collective class action grievance proving that working together truly pays off (p.8). Their story articulates the persistence and patience they had to maintain through the long process, and solidarity they had to build in order to win.

We have challenging days ahead. We will stand firm to continue the fight for justice and to uphold our union values. We believe in the power of solidarity, creativity, imagination, belonging, community and yes, fun. May Day - also known as International Workers Day is fast approaching. Our website and socials will have ways to engage and participate. Perhaps you'll meet some new people and union members, understand a different perspective, or just be in solidarity with others. Bring your humorous and artistic signs, puppets, balloons, and your full self. We need to source joy, fun, and imagination, as part of, and along with our struggle. Our full humanity is needed now, more than ever. Hope to see you out there - smiling, crying, or both!

In compassion and solidarity,

Karen

PROTEC17 stands in solidarity with unions, community in wake of federal attacks

Since January, PROTEC17 members have been taking to the streets to stand with fellow workers and community members who are suffering in the face of unjust federal policy changes that are hurting working people and their families. After a barrage of executive orders from the new federal administration to dismantle government jobs, detain immigrant workers, and more, rallies, marches, and protests have been happening across the country to decry these threats to our democracy.

In February, PROTEC17 joined the local chapter of AFGE - the union representing federal employees - to speak out against the severe cuts to programs and staff at federal programs related to public health, the environment, education, and more at 'Federal Building Fridays' (photo below). In March, PROTEC17 members rallied outside of the Tacoma Detention Center after two local union workers were detained without cause (cover photo). And in early April, PROTEC17 members joined thousands of neighbors for 'Hands Off' rallies across the Pacific Northwest.

If you would like to join your PROTEC17 siblings at upcoming rallies and events, follow us on Facebook (@protec17) and Instagram (@weareprotec17) for the most up-to-date info. ■



Negotiations for the King County Coalition Labor Agreement underway



Meet the PROTEC17 members of the King County Coalition of Unions team!

In February, the PROTEC17 member-led bargaining team began negotiations with King County management on the next Coalition Labor Agreement (CLA) for 2026 and beyond. In the two months since, a few Tentative Agreements have been reached - including improvements to organ donor leave and Bilingual Premium pay - but there is still a lot of work to do before reaching a deal.

The King County Coalition of Unions consists of 18 unions who represent over 7,000 union members across the County. By working together to negotiate the terms of the CLA, the Coalition is able to secure stronger wages and benefits for members across the County. In addition, each individual PROTEC17 bargaining unit within the CLA will negotiate unit-specific language as part of the contract appendices in what's called "small table bargaining".

As of late March, the County had

rejected the Coalition's proposals for wage increases and improvements to language around vacation leave accrual, longevity pay, paid parental leave, safety gear allowance, and career development resources for Temporary Time Limited (TLT) employees. PROTEC17 King County members are encouraged to sign the petition for a fair contract at: actionnetwork.org/petitions/kc-cla-faircontract.

In order to receive the most up-to-date information on contract negotiations, members should update their personal email with us at protec17.org/contact-info-update. And if you'd like to get more involved in helping to keep your colleagues informed and activated throughout negotiations, please join the Contract Action Team! Email PROTEC17 Union Representative Regan McBride for more information at regan@protec17.org.

Negotiations will continue this spring and summer, when the team will also begin "small table" negotiations. ■

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

Regional Executive Committee adopts budget, new Chapter, and resolution to protect our communities



n Sat., March 1, the PROTEC17 Regional Executive Committee (REC) — our union’s policy-making body —

convened online to conduct the business of our union. Among one of their most important roles during the winter meeting of the twice-yearly event, delegates review and adopt the PROTEC17 annual budget. In other significant moments of the March 1st meeting, members also voted to establish a new PROTEC17 chapter, and to adopt a resolution to take action to resist the erosion of our democracy.

The meeting opened with a welcome and tribal land acknowledgement by PROTEC17 Executive Board President Rachael Brooks. Executive Board Trustee Emily Tabachnick reviewed community agreements, and Vice President Renee Thompson swore in new delegates. Then previous meeting minutes were approved by the delegate body.

Attendees heard from newly organized PROTEC17 members at Sound Transit — where a first contract with this new employer had just been ratified. The delegate body then voted to establish the

Sound Transit Chapter of PROTEC17. (You can read more about these new organizing efforts on pages 6-7.)

Executive Director Karen Estevenin began her ‘state-of-the-union’ report with a quote about ‘walking in the light’ by the late activist and singer Robert Flack, then recapped our top 10 successes of 2024. She gave a snapshot of our growing union in figures highlighting our expanding membership and burgeoning leadership and training programs.

“As a union, we turn towards light and away from hate,” said Executive Director Estevenin. “The next few years may be hard, but we will remain committed to finding and walking in the light.”

After a review of the proposed budget by PROTEC17 Secretary-Treasurer Mason Emrys, delegates asked several budgetary questions, then voted to adopt the 2025 union budget, which includes more resources for negotiations, organizing, and outreach.

The theme of this REC meeting was ‘Resilience and Action’, and this was well reflected in the presentation of a union-wide resolution from the Executive Board

— sponsored by Secretary-Treasurer Emrys — that put forth actionable steps that we will take as a union to use our solidarity and strength to fight back against threats to working people. The resolution was unanimously adopted by the delegate body. You can find an excerpt from the resolution below, and you can read the full text of the resolution on our website at: protec17.org/racial-justice.

Delegates then heard from fellow members who shared their union stories and victories with the larger group, and in small breakout rooms. After reconvening, there were short political reports from Political Director Mark Watson and Research Director/Oregon Legislative Advocate Elliot Levin. Organizing Director Jessica Olivas also reported on PROTEC17 organizing efforts planned for 2025.

Thank you to all of the REC delegates for a productive meeting! The next REC meeting will be held in-person at the Museum of Flight on October 25. Delegates will receive more information as we get closer to that time. ■

RESOLUTION

To resist tyranny and protect PROTEC17 members, working people, and our communities

...THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, now is not the time to agonize but to organize and resist tyranny. PROTEC17, and union members across the Pacific Northwest, must join with other Labor and community allies to plan, advocate, and take action so we do not move backwards, but protect each other and our communities...

Welcome Sound Transit!

First PIC contract ratified, new Chapter formed in March

Alongside the rapid expansion of the light rail in the Puget Sound region over the last several years, employees at the agency that makes it all happen were seeing the need to come together to protect and enhance the worker-centered culture they had developed there. So, for more than a year, employees in several different roles at Sound Transit (ST) have been working to form their union with PROTEC17.

For Sound Transit workers, PROTEC17 is the perfect fit. In addition to representing thousands of public sector workers in similar transit roles throughout the Pacific Northwest, PROTEC17 has a long experience of negotiating successful contracts with King County Executive Dow Constantine - the incoming Sound Transit CEO.



Above: Sound Transit Fare Ambassadors Ian Stern, Dante Morelli, and Lexi Young. Below, left: Sound Transit member Gunnar Bjerck was a guest at the fall REC meeting. Next page: member leaders (clockwise from top left) Lexi Young, Brian Vierela, Sal Ponce, Pam Wrenn, and Pasha Petite at the tabling events in March.



“PROTEC17 gave me the resources and support for my ongoing unionizing effort, and it has greatly impacted my life, giving me hope again for the future.”

Gunnar Bjerck
Senior Project Controls Specialist
Sound Transit

“Times are uncertain and there’s strength in numbers,” said Sound Transit employee Tyler Ramirez. “I’m interested in joining the Sound Transit Union to protect what we have and to ensure a fair working environment in the future.”

The first group at Sound Transit to organize with PROTEC17 was the Passenger Information Coordinators (PICs), thanks to former PROTEC17 member Mindi Mezek who joined ST after leaving her role as a 911 operator at the Washington State Patrol. After filing for certification with the Public Employee Relations Commission (PERC) early last year and bargaining their first contract last fall, the PICs reached a tentative agreement containing strong language and economic wins in late February 2025 - just in time to get approved as a new chapter of PROTEC17 at the March Regional Executive Committee meeting.

Since the PICs began organizing, over 230 Sound Transit employees in different positions have started the unionizing

process, including: Field Activity Specialists, Superintendents, Transit Systems Electronics Technicians, Fare Ambassadors and Supervisors, Transit Systems Program Managers, and employees in the Environmental & Sustainability Division, the Community Engagement Division, and the Construction Permitting Division. There is also a website devoted entirely to Sound Transit employees who are interested in learning more about the unionizing process: soundtransitunion.org. And union member leaders are hosting monthly tabling events outside of Union Station to chat with their colleagues about joining PROTEC17.

This organizing momentum has really invigorated leaders like Gunnar Bjerck, a Senior Project Controls Specialist:

“PROTEC17 gave me the resources and support for my ongoing unionizing effort, and it has greatly impacted my life, giving me hope for the future,” he said.

Welcome to our newest PROTEC17 members at Sound Transit! ■

To learn more the campaign, visit: soundtransitunion.org

FEATURES



Clark County members win historic wage parity arbitration plus significant increases in 2025-2027 contract

In March, the Clark County Coalition of Unions reached a tentative agreement on the 2025-2027 contract, as well as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on a two-year long class action grievance, cementing significant award payments and contract wins for members.

In previous negotiation cycles, Clark County management claimed they had no money to work with, forcing lead union negotiators to get creative in order to reach a deal. This resulted in a wage parity “me too” clause in the last contract that would kick in if the County gave managers a larger wage increase than members. In January 2023, the clause was triggered when the County Manager was given a 10 percent increase. A class action grievance was filed on behalf of Coalition members who had received only 2.2 percent.

The Coalition attempted to resolve the grievance outside of arbitration – first through direct negotiating and later through mediation – but the County refused to increase wages or consider any other proposed alternatives for members. Instead, they claimed that the County Manager was a contract employee, and therefore not subject to the terms of the MOU.

“Receiving the “me too” payment will have a ripple effect on my family and our quality of life. I feel secure knowing that the Clark County Coalition of Unions has my best interests at heart.”

Tina Kendall
Environmental Operations
Specialist Senior, Clark County



The Clark County Coalition of Unions, including PROTEC17 members and staff: Katie Carle, Joe Conner, Tina Kendall, Michael King, Alex Van Dinter, and Rachel Whiteside (Union Representative)

After hearing the case last summer, an independent arbitrator sided with the Coalition and awarded members a significant decision that includes retro pay back to January 2023. The total amount owed to Coalition members totaled \$3.99 million, with some individual payments to PROTEC17 members totaling over \$20,000. In addition to the payouts, the arbitrator imposed a deadline, and included a penalty clause to incentivize the County to meet the intended time frame.

While the arbitrator’s decision was delivered mere weeks after the Coalition began bargaining in July 2024, debates over how to interpret various elements of the decision began to slow the pace of negotiations on economic issues. The Coalition and County were still negotiating after the expiration date of the contract in December.

In a show of strength, the Coalition filed a second class action grievance this January - the month that penalty interest began to accrue on retro payments. The County responded by denying nearly every economic proposal made by the Coalition that amounted to more than a few dollars over the term of the contract.

In previous years, this may have been where the Coalition would fall apart. But under the leadership of PROTEC17, the

Coalition had been focused on rebuilding solidarity with labor partners, bargaining teams, and the collective membership. Bargaining team members trusted lead negotiators because they were involved at every decision point, and proposals never moved forward until there was consensus across the entire Coalition. And members trusted their bargaining teams because communication was coordinated across the Coalition so that every member heard the same information at the same time, squashing rumors that undermine solidarity.

Because of the leverage of the second grievance and looming penalty increases, the Coalition was able to secure a strong contract with general wage adjustments beyond the arbitration awards, a longevity premium, increases to vacation leave accrual and healthcare benefit contributions, to name a few. These wins mean that every member will see a minimum of a six percent increase – eight percent for members who qualify for the longevity premium. Plus, many members were advanced steps on the pay scale as part of the MOU.

The Coalition’s commitment, solidarity, and creative leveraging of circumstances delivered unprecedented wins that will have lasting impacts for both members and the Coalition itself. ■

PROTEC17 EVENT CALENDAR

APRIL

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

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	

JUNE

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					

- April 1 - Portland Chapter Meeting
- April 1 - PROTEC17 Presents: Union 101!
- April 2 - Steward Training - Part 1
- April 3 - Future of Work Member Action Meeting
- April 9 - Steward Training - Part 2
- April 9 - WSDOT Chapter Meeting
- April 9 - Tacoma Chapter Meeting
- April 10 - Seattle Chapter Meeting
- April 15 - Benton-Franklin Chapter Meeting
- April 16 - Portland Chapter Meeting
- April 17 - King County Coalition CAT Meeting
- April 17 - Snohomish County Chapter Meeting
- April 23 - Member Training: Organizing 101 - Part 1
- April 23 - King County Chapter Meeting
- April 24 - Seattle All-Day Leadership Training
- April 30 - Member Training: Organizing 101 - Part 2
- May 1 - International Workers' Day/May Day!**
- May 6 - Portland Chapter Meeting
- May 7 - Steward Training - Part 1
- May 8 - Seattle Chapter Meeting
- May 9 - Future of Work Member Action Meeting
- May 14 - Steward Training - Part 2
- May 14 - WSDOT Chapter Meeting
- May 14 - Tacoma Chapter Meeting
- May 15 - King County Coalition CAT Meeting
- May 20 - Benton-Franklin Chapter Meeting
- May 21 - Training: How to Protect Your Coworkers from Freedom Foundation Propaganda
- May 21 - Portland Chapter Meeting
- May 22 - Seattle Steward Meeting
- May 26 - Memorial Day
- May 28 - King County Chapter Meeting
- June 3 - Portland Chapter Meeting
- June 4 - Steward Training - Part 1
- June 4 - DOL Revenue Auditors Meeting
- June 5 - Future of Work Member Action Meeting
- June 11 - Steward Training - Part 2
- June 11 - WSDOT Chapter Meeting
- June 11 - Tacoma Chapter Meeting
- June 12 - Seattle Chapter Meeting
- June 17 - Benton-Franklin Chapter Meeting
- June 18 - Portland Chapter Meeting
- June 25 - King County Chapter Meeting
- June 19 - Juneteenth
- June 25 - Training: How to Welcome Your Fellow Union Members Effectively!
- June 26 - 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.

PROTEC17 Transportation Lobby Day

PROTEC17 members from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) descended on capitol grounds in Olympia on Tues., March 25 for Transportation Lobby Day. This day was organized for PROTEC17 members to send lawmakers three primary messages as they attempt to create a budget amidst a multi-billion dollar State deficit: 1) to fund the 2025-2027 State contract, 2) to find a solution to the State budget deficit that avoids furloughs for State employees, and 3) to fund transportation projects that are desperately needed across our State.

In March, both the House and Senate released their transportation- and operating-budget proposals. While the House budget proposal excluded furloughs, the Senate budget proposed 13 furlough days for State employees over the next biennium.



WSDOT members Daniel Jones and Chad Ross with Representative Tom Dent (R-D13).



WSDOT members Joseph Opoku and Steve Morgan stand with PROTEC17 Executive Director Karen Estevenin, Rep. Alex Ramel (D-D40), and Union Representative Sarah Lorenzini.

During Lobby Day, members discussed their transportation projects, like road and bridge maintenance and fish passage, with over 20 lawmakers in individual meetings throughout the day. Members also discussed our legislative priorities, like progressive taxation, which would be a step toward filling the deep hole in the budget.

While PROTEC17 staff will be in Olympia through the end of session on April 27 lobbying for these priorities, legislators will have the ultimate say on all budgetary matters, including furloughs. In the event furloughs do end up in the budget, we will negotiate the impacts. The last time widespread furloughs were implemented back in the great recession, we were able to negotiate additional time off as well as retirement protections.

If you weren't able to attend Lobby Day, you can still make your voice heard and hold your lawmakers accountable. You can access our pre-written letter campaign to send a message to Gov. Ferguson and your State Legislators at: actionnetwork.org/letters/dont-balance-the-budget-on-the-backs-of-state-employees. Tell them that they cannot balance the budget on the backs of State employees!

You can also contact PROTEC17 Political Director Mark Watson, at mark@protec17.org or 800-783-0017 ext. 133 to get more involved in future efforts down in Olympia, including possibly sharing your story through virtual or in-person testimony about how furloughs will impact you and your family. ■

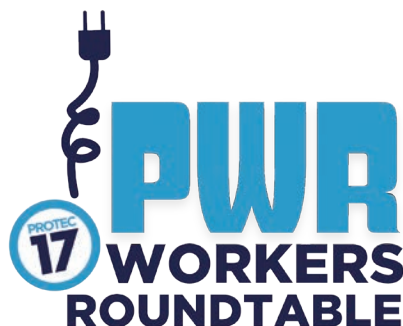
Learn more about the 2025 legislative session on our website at:
protec17.org/legislative-priorities

PROTEC17 Workers' Roundtable (PWR!) gearing up for local election endorsements and more this spring

At the March 20 meeting of the PROTEC17 Worker's Roundtable (PWR), over 60 members met to strategize about our political priorities for 2025 and to look at ways to mobilize and organize members around policies and issues that impact workers and our communities.

One of the priority items for the PWR group this spring is holding interviews and making endorsements in key local elections that will directly impact PROTEC17 members, their work, and their families. Some of the 2025 races that the endorsement committee is looking at are: King County Executive, five open seats on the King County Council, Seattle Mayor, Seattle City Council Positions 2, 8, and 9, and City of Tacoma elections.

In addition to endorsements, the PWR group is looking at ways to support larger efforts to fight back against federal and other attacks on public services, and to



mobilize members on policy issues like: housing and homelessness solutions, climate action, dependent care support, and civil rights protections. Across Washington and Oregon, unions are meeting regularly to coordinate against growing threats to workers, including mobilization for International Workers' Day on May 1, which the PWR group is ready to take on.

At the meeting, members Jeremy Ward (King County), Becca Reilly (City of Seattle) and Rob Foxcurran (City of Seattle) shared their experience with different advocacy

efforts. Ward stressed the importance of talking with co-workers about political action efforts in order to make the connection about how policy changes directly impact our work. Reilly shared her experience lobbying lawmakers to help change policy and save union jobs. And Foxcurran talked about how voluntary contributions to the Political Action Committee (PAC) fund are vital to increasing our union's influence and gaining access to key decision-makers.

As the PWR group grows and evolves in the coming years, member participation and leadership will be key to our collective ability to make positive change. If you would like to get more involved in our political program - from the endorsement committee and GOTV (voting) efforts, to conducting research and building community partnerships - *or if you have interest in running for office yourself!* - please contact PROTEC17 Political Director, Mark Watson at mark@protec17.org. ■

DONATE to the Political Action Committee!



As public employees, lawmakers at every level make decisions that impact whether your jobs will be funded, your retirement plans will remain solvent, or whether you can take time off to care for a sick loved one. *That's why it's so important to support lawmakers who support public employees!*

PROTEC17 members can help advocate for laws and policies at the city, county and state level that support our members and their families. In addition, members fund our political action committee (PAC), which makes endorsements for worker-friendly candidates. *The PAC is funded through voluntary donations — NEVER DUES MONEY.*



To donate to the PAC, scan the QR code or visit:
protec17.org/PAC

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2025 PROTEC17 Scholarship Program **APPLICATION NOW OPEN!**

The PROTEC17 annual scholarship program awards two scholarships to the child, grandchild or dependent of an active member who wishes to continue their education beyond high school at a college, university or technical institute. ***This year, each award is \$5,000!*** Through a comprehensive and competitive process, one scholarship will be awarded to an individual starting their first year, and the other will be for an individual continuing their education beyond freshman year.



Find more info and the application at:
protec17.org/benefits

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