

Fall 2025 Vol 30 No. 4







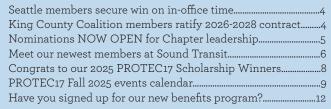


#### On the Cover:

PROTEC17 members from across the Puget Sound celebrated Labor Day along with hundreds of union siblings at a rally near the Palantir offices in Seattle to protest the billionaire-backed company's surveillance of workers. Read more on page 7.

#### **News & Features**







#### **Political Action**

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The last issue of Insight contained an image of PROTEC17 members at a May Day rally where one of the signs had a hand $drawn\ picture\ of\ a\ guillotine.\ While\ this\ symbol\ is\ often\ used\ to\ represent\ opposition\ to\ perceived\ oppression\ and\ injustice,$ we recognize that there must be a shared understanding of that. PROTEC17 remains true to our mission of building community, and in no way condones violence in any form. We apologize for any distress this might have caused.

#### insight

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#### insight

Fall 2025 Vol 30 / No. 4

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#### The superstars of today

recently came back from a trip to Germany where I ran the Berlin marathon. It was a fantastic race, a lot of fun, and a personal achievement that I'm incredibly grateful to have been able to complete. While my finisher's medal remains a treasured memento of the trip, I returned with something even more important – a deep feeling of awe and inspiration for how people who endured one of the most horrific periods in history chose to shine their light. During the rise of fascism, the onslaught war, and the Holocaust, these heroes put their own lives in danger to fight, resist, and protect others. They are the unknown superstars.

As we are currently experiencing our own government shut-down (at the time of press), escalating violence across the political spectrum, and daily attacks on immigrants and working people, this history struck me with unsettling relevance. And it has left me with a sobering clarity that all of us have a role in resisting the injustices that are around us. We need not wait for instructions, for a rally, or for some opportunity that is being coordinated. As union members we understand the power of collective action, but individual actions are also powerful and necessary to combat hate. The true accounts that I took away with me from Berlin were of ordinary people who became extraordinary by doing what was in their sphere of influence to do. Their small actions were actually immense actions, creating a ripple effect, saving lives, and making a difference.

Who are the everyday superstars of today? I'm not talking about the rich and famous, but rather the person who chooses to warmly greet a stranger; the person who lets someone else go first in the grocery store line; or the person who takes time to help a neighbor. This edition of Insight highlights superstars like the Sound Transit Fare Ambassadors who support transit riders (p. 6), our scholarship winners who have aspiring dreams and goals (p. 8), and union and community activists taking to the streets on Labor Day to raise our voices for workers over billionaires (p. 7). These stories may not include examples of life-saving acts. But what was incredible to me in reading the histories of people in Germany was that they didn't see themselves as heroes or heroines – they just saw that they had an opportunity in front of them to choose love. And they did.

We have the ability to change our world just by doing the small things – stepping forward with a full heart and a dash of courage, and not looking back. Union members, students, educators, activists, young foolhardy kids, wise seniors, counselors, advocates, working people, PROTEC17 members in this magazine, and all those serving our communities – each of us has what it takes to be the superstars of today.

In compassion and solidarity,

Karen



Karen Estevenin Executive Director

## Seattle members secure win on in-office time

ROTEC17 reached a settlement agreement with the City of Seattle in September related to a grievance around man-

datory in-person office requirements. The agreement permits employees to work four hours in the office – with the remainder of the workday worked remotely – and count it as an "in-office day" for the purposes of meeting the three-day in-office minimum requirement.

PROTEC17 initially filed a grievance on this matter in January, and moved the matter to arbitration (the final step of our grievance procedure) in February. The arbitration hearing was scheduled for Sept. 4, 2025, but we were able to reach a favorable agreement with the City that avoided a tedious arbitration process, where a specific outcome is not guaranteed.

Individual managers now have the flexibility to decide whether employees can satisfy the in-office requirement based on a cumulative total of hours over a week, instead of four hours on three different days. Managers may only require employees to work longer than four hours in-office when circumstances require an employee's physical presence in the office, or when there is a documented performance issue.

When this language was negotiated in 2023, it was intended to apply to employees who could commute home during their lunch break. It was not intended to create split shifts or to allow commute time to count for work time in these circumstances. A provision in the latest settlement addresses this.

While the settlement does not impact all PROTEC17 members as many jobs require employees to regularly report to the office, it is a significant victory in the defense of our contract language.

# King County members ratify 2026-2028 Coalition Labor Agreement

n June, PROTEC17 King
County members, along with
members from over 20 other
unions in the King County
Coalition of Unions, reached a tentative
agreement on their Coalition Labor Agreement (CLA) for 2026-2028.

Over the summer, additional changes to individual unit appendices were negotiated at "small table" bargaining, and tentative agreements were reached in all units in August. Coalition members then voted by unit on the package deal. At the close of voting in early September, all PROTEC17 units covered by the CLA had ratified their contracts.

The new contract secures a minimum 10.5 percent wage increase over the threeyear period, and includes many other gains for Coalition represented employees.

One of the new improvements in the CLA is a historic, Coalition-wide bilingual premium. Previously, bilingual premiums existed inconsistently across the County and those critical language skills were not well compensated. The new contract language provides tiers of consistent premiums for employees using their language skills as part of their work.

Our PROTEC17 and Coalition union siblings also won improvements to the

vacation accrual table for the first time in over a decade, raising the number of vacation days that new employees are able to accrue, and ensuring that employees see increases in vacation accrual after their first four years of employment.

All new contract terms, including a \$1,500 signing bonus, will go into effect on January 1, 2026.

The CLA covers nearly all PROTEC17 members at the County, with the exception of Transit Admins, Chiefs, and Superintendents, who negotiate separately because they are eligible to use a process called interest arbitration. Transit Admins have since ratified their agreement. Transit Chiefs and Supervisors are pursuing the interest arbitration process – members should check their personal emails for the latest updates.

The CLA was bargained in person at the Teamsters Hall in Tukwila with over 100 union leaders and staff (pictured below) in the room with King County management. The team was able to use an inclusive consensus process to make tough decisions about issues that impact our members at work every day.

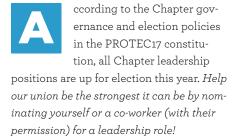
Thank you to all of the PROTEC17 members who served on the CLA bargaining team for a job well done!



Members from over 20 unions at King County, including PROTEC17, formed the over 100 person team to negotiate the 2026-2028 Coalition Labor Agreement.

## Get active in your union!

## Nominations for leadership positions due 11/14!



Chapter leadership positions include President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Regional Executive Committee (REC) Delegates. Some Chapters also elect delegates to their regional Labor Council. In addition, all members who occupy the role of Chapter President will automatically be designated as a Delegate to the REC. All newly elected leaders will serve a three-year term from 2026-2028.

The duties of each position vary, but all roles are integral! The president presides



over chapter meetings, creating an agenda and working with PROTEC17 staff to invite members to the meeting. The vice president assists the president and runs the Chapter meeting in their absence. The secretary records and preserves accurate minutes of all chapter meetings The treasurer keeps track of chapter funds and works

with PROTEC17 staff to purchase chapter-approved expenses. In some Chapters, one person serves as both secretary and treasurer. Regional Executive Committee delegates serve on a union-wide policymaking body that convenes twice per year.

You can find the full list of positions below. As a reminder, the number of REC delegate positions is proportional to each Chapter's size. If you'd like to nominate yourself or another member for a leadership role, please email your nominations to election@protec17.org by Friday, Nov.

If we receive more nominations than available positions, elections will be held during the period of Nov. 17-Dec. 5. If you have more questions about what being a Chapter leader entails, please reach out to your Union Representative.

#### Open positions by Chapter for the 2026-2028 term

#### Benton-Franklin Health

President (REC Delegate) Vice President Secretary/Treasurer

#### Chelan-Douglas Health

President (REC Delegate) Vice President Secretary/Treasurer

#### **Clark County**

President (REC Delegate) Vice President Secretary Treasurer REC Delegate (1 position)

#### King County Regional Homelessness Authority

President (REC Delegate) Vice President Secretary/Treasurer

#### King County

President (REC Delegate) Vice President Secretary/Treasurer MLK Labor Council Delegate REC Delegates (30 positions)

#### Kitsap Health

President (REC Delegate) Vice President Secretary/Treasurer

#### Mount Vernon

President (REC Delegate) Secretary/Treasurer

#### Pierce County

President (REC Delegate) Vice President Secretary/Treasurer REC Delegate (1 position)

#### Port of Seattle

President (REC Delegate) Vice President Secretary/Treasurer

#### **Portland**

President (REC Delegate) Vice President Secretary Treasurer REC Delegates (11 positions)

President (REC Delegate) Vice President Secretary/Treasurer MLK Labor Council Delegate REC Delegates (37 positions)

**Skagit County**President (REC Delegate) Vice President Secretary/Treasurer

#### Snohomish County Health Department

President (REC Delegate) Vice President Secretary/Treasurer

#### Sound Transit

President (REC Delegate) Vice President Secretary/Treasurer

#### **Spokane County**

President (REC Delegate) Vice President Secretary/Treasurer

#### Spokane Regional Health District

President (REC Delegate) Vice President Secretary/Treasurer Spokane Regional Labor Council Delegate Regional Executive Committee Delegate (1 position)

#### Tacoma

President (REC Delegate) Vice President Secretary/Treasurer Regional Executive Committee Delegates (2 positions)

#### Whatcom Health

President (REC Delegate) Vice President Secretary/Treasurer

#### Washington State Department

of Licensing President (REC Delegate) Vice President Secretary/Treasurer Regional Executive Committee Delegates (2 positions)

#### Washington State Department of Transportation

President (REC Delegate) Vice President Secretary/Treasurer Regional Executive Committee Delegates (16 positions)

#### Washington State Patrol

President (REC Delegate) Vice President Secretary/Treasurer Regional Executive Committee Delegate (1 position)

#### Yakima Health

President (REC Delegate) Vice President Secretary/Treasurer

## Meet our newest members! Sound Transit Fare Ambassadors

s one of the newest Chapters in our union, the Sound Transit membership continues to grow! Fare Ambassadors are

the newest group at Sound Transit to be certified as a union by the Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC) and will be headed to the table shortly to fight for better wages and working conditions.

While their job title might suggest that their work is only about enforcing fares – which they do effectively, resulting in over 90 percent in rider compliance – the role of the Fare Ambassadors is much broader and far more community-centered than most people think. In fact, fare enforcement is less than half of their job.

According to Sound Transit, Fare
Ambassadors spend over a third of their
time directly servicing the public. They answer passenger questions, support riders
during service disruptions, and connect
individuals in need with social services.
Fare Ambassadors also welcome visitors
to our region, helping them navigate a

"Every shift brings new opportunities to connect with riders and assist visitors from out of town, which makes this role exceptionally rewarding.

There's something incredibly fulfilling about guiding people in the right direction and seeing their faces light up with a smile. Those moments make my job not just a duty but a joy."

Lotovale Purcell, Fare Ambassador Sound Transit



system they might not be familiar with. For many riders, Fare Ambassadors are the first, and most visible, representatives of Sound Transit.

"We're the interface through which passengers most directly and frequently interact with the agency, and leaving a good impression with passengers, even when giving a warning, can have lasting positive effects for both the passengers and Sound Transit," said Fare Ambassador Dante Morelli.

Beyond customer service, Fare Ambassadors act as the agency's eyes and ears on the ground. They are often the first to identify maintenance issues or technical safety concerns and report them back to the agency. Their work keeps the system moving smoothly and safely for everyone.

The work of Fare Ambassadors is also demanding. They are in the field 365 days a year, from early morning until late night. They dedicate their time, energy, and passion for public transit to serve riders and their communities. Their commitment shows why fair compensation and safe working conditions are essential – not just for themselves but for the countless people who depend on their support every day.

If you know of colleagues who want to unionize, reach out to Organizing Director Jessica Olivas at jessica@protec17.org.



Sound Transit Fare Ambassadors at a PROTEC17 tabling event outside of Union Station in September. Above, left to right: Cristina OLeary, Lotovale Purcell, Alicia Tauala, and Amadeus Ford. Top of page: Pierre Dudley and Nina Banks

## **Labor Day 2025**

## Celebrating 'workers over billionaires' across the U.S.



Union members and leaders from across King County - including PROTEC17 Executive Director Karen Estevenin (second from left) — gathered to say 'Workers Over Billionaires' outside of the Palantir office in Seattle on Labor Day.

housands of union members and community allies across the Pacific Northwest and around the country came together over the Labor Day weekend to celebrate worker power and to rally against attacks on working families. Many of these actions were part of a growing movement called 'Workers over Billionaires' that seeks to challenge the greed and power that billionaires are amassing at the expense of working people.

In Seattle, PROTEC17 members (pictured on the cover) rallied with hundreds of their union siblings outside the offices of Palantir – the tech company co-founded by billionaire Peter Thiel whose surveillance technology is being used by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency to further the federal

administration's campaign to detain and deport working people, many unjustly held without cause or due process.

At the Seattle rally, IATSE Local 15 member and beloved theater teacher Fernando Rocha spoke about his experience of being detained by ICE at the NW Detention Center in Tacoma. He spoke of the dehumanizing and humiliating experience, showing the ankle monitor he has been forced to wear as a condition of release while he awaits a hearing in his asylum case. Rocha shared the stories of the men he was detained with, immigrants who have spent years in the U.S., raising families, paying taxes, and yet now are treated as criminals.

"These were no criminals," said Rocha.
"They were workers, fathers, providers,
men whose only 'crime' was the pursuit

of survival. Most came from construction sites, farms, kitchens, and saloons. Some had once held degrees and titles in their countries — the doctor from India, now driving a taxi. The engineer from the Middle East, now sweeping floors. They had traded their dreams for jobs most Americans wouldn't touch, not because they lacked ambition or education, but because they were chasing something more urgent: dignity, safety, a future."

PROTEC17 members attended many other Labor Day events throughout Washington and Oregon, including the annual picnic in Spokane, the Ralph Chaplin memorial in Tacoma, and the family-friendly celebration at Oaks Amusement Park in Portland.

### For more photos, visit: protec17.org/gallery

#### Congrats to our 2025 PROTEC17 scholarship winners!

he PROTEC17 scholarship
program has awarded over
\$75,000 in scholarships in
the last 14 years to members'
dependents to help in their pursuit of a
higher education. We are proud to announce that our 2025 scholarship winners
are Brayden Wang and Benjamin Sauer.

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. This year, the award amount for the two scholarships – one for an incoming freshman, and one for a continuing college student – was increased from \$3,000 to \$5,000 to keep pace with the rising costs of a college education.

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.

Student essays were evaluated – anonymously to reduce bias – by the PROTEC17 Executive Board. The Board found reading all of the essays very inspiring and rewarding, but a couple of students rose to the top.

Brayden Wang is the child of City of Portland member Xinju Wang, and is our graduating high school student winner. He started this fall at the University of Rochester with dreams to pursue a dual degree in music and biochemistry. He is taking an ambitious 26 credits this semester in courses ranging from music theory to chemistry.

In his scholarship essay, Wang reflected on how his family's union membership has impacted his path and his values, beyond just providing financial stability and health benefits.

"The most important lesson that being a union family taught me is the transformative power of unity - how individuals, sometimes feel powerless and isolated on their own, can create meaningful change by working together toward a noble goal."

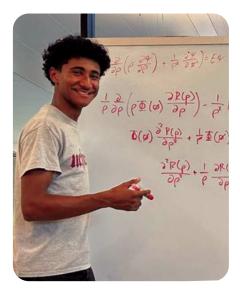


"Attending the
University of Rochester
allows me to set myself
up for a realistic and
successful career in
either music or the
sciences. Scholarships
like this one make
pursuing my dream so
much more feasible."

Brayden Wang, child of City of Portland member Xinju Wang, *University of Rochester* 

Benjamin Sauer, child of Pierce County member Joy Sauer, is entering his sophomore year at Pomona College this fall, where he's pursuing a liberal arts program that will set him up to successfully transfer to CalTech to complete his degree in Civil Engineering. He wants to become an Urban Planner, with a focus on affordable housing and transportation for marginalized families.

"Seeing the racial wealth gap, overt racism, and the persisting affects of redlining and gentrification, I believe my best way of pushing Martin Luther King's dream



"I intend to become an Urban Planner, working to improve the quality of life for marginalized and displaced families. This scholarship allows me to spend more time on the coursework that is crucial to finding success in this field."

Benjamin Sauer, child of Pierce County member Joy Sauer, *Pomona College* 

forward is by pursuing a career in Urban Planning," Sauer said in his application.

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.

Many thanks to the Board for their continued support and participation in this program. And to all of our applicants and our two winners – best of luck this school year and beyond!

## PROTEC17 EVENT CALENDAR

#### **OCTOBER**

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Oct.	/-PROIECI	/ Presents:	Ourou 101;

Oct. 7 - Portland Chapter Meeting
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Oct. 28 - Leader Training: Protecting Coworkers from Propaganda

Oct. 30 - Sound Transit Contract Action Team Meeting

#### **NOVEMBER**

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16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

#### Nov. 4 - Portland Chapter Meeting

#### Nov. 5 - Steward Training - Part 1

#### Nov. 11 - Veterans' Day Holiday

#### Nov. 18 - Benton-Franklin Chapter Meeting

#### Nov. 19 - Portland Chapter Meeting

#### Nov. 20 - Sound Transit Contract Action Team Meeting

#### Nov. 27 - Thanksgiving Day Holiday

Nov. 28 - Native American Heritage Day Holiday

#### **DECEMBER**

# 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 4 5 4

#### Dec. 2 - Portland Chapter Meeting

- Dec. 3 Steward Training Part 1
- Dec. 10 Steward Training Part 2
- Dec. 10 WSDOT Chapter Meeting
- Dec. 10 Tacoma Chapter Meeting
- Dec. 10 Tacoma Chapter Meeting
- Dec. 11 Seattle Chapter Meeting
- Dec. 16 Benton-Franklin Chapter Meeting
- Dec. 17 Portland Chapter Meeting
- Dec. 18 Sound Transit Contract Action Team Meeting
- Dec. 18 Snohomish County Chapter Meeting
- Dec. 25 Christmas Day Holiday

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

### Transportation budget passes in special session of Oregon legislature; plus other session results

iven the tenuous budget situation that the City of Portland was facing this year, PROTEC17 closely

tracked the state transportation funding package that would provide increasingly necessary funding for our Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) members. When Portland City Council passed a budget in the spring that assumed Salem would pass such a package, the bill had still not emerged from the bipartisan closeddoor working group. We, like many, grew increasingly nervous as session advanced into June without a transportation bill, and the constitutionally mandated July session end date grew closer.

After the bill was finally released, Republicans who had been involved in crafting the package split from the working group and lined up in opposition. This left the Democratic majority to pass the bill in a very short amount of time with no votes to spare, and as the final days of the session loomed, they could not accomplish this. PROTEC17 opposed last-minute efforts to cut local transportation agencies out of the package, and in late June the legislature adjourned without having passed a bill for transportation revenue.

What followed has been a summer full of attempts to reconvene the legislature to finish this important work. The Oregon legislature's 2025 session ended in July, and the failure of the body to pass a transportation funding package caused a situation that extended into the fall.

On September 29, the legislature completed the process of passing the bill – with the funding needed for PBOT – and at the time of publication of this article we expect the governor to sign the bill shortly.



While the session will largely be remembered by many of our members for the torturous path that the transportation funding bill has followed, there were several other important moments for Labor and our Portland members.

## SB 916: Unemployment Benefits for Striking Workers

In a major win for organized labor, the passage of Senate Bill (SB) 916 ends the restriction on unemployment insurance benefits for workers who are out of work due to a strike. Notably for PROTEC17 members, SB 916 will make Oregon the first state in the country to cover public sector employees with such benefits. PROTEC17 supported this bill and, while we know that strikes are always a last resort in a labor conflict, we believe that this helps to level the playing field between labor and management during a strike.

#### HB 5015: BOLI Funding

For years the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industry (BOLI), the agency tasked with enforcing wage, hours, and civil rights laws in the workplace, has been severely underfunded. Supported by PROTEC17, House Bill (HB) 5015 will provide a critical injection of cash into the agency to help clear the backlog of complaints that this underfunding has created.

#### SB 974: Permitting "Shot Clock"

Unfortunately, despite opposition from Cities, Counties, and labor groups such as PROTEC17, the legislature passed SB 974 which sets timelines under which certain permitting decisions must be made. We heard from members that this would be detrimental to the City's efforts to enforce code requirements, and helped facilitate testimony underscoring this point. In a political environment where permitting processes have been vilified as preventing development, this proved to be a popular bill for legislators to support and it passed with wide margins. We were disappointed by this outcome and will track the impact that this has on the work of our members.

If you have any questions about the 2025 Oregon legislative session, please contact PROTEC17 Research Director and Legislative Advocate Elliot Levin at elliot@protec17.org.

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

## **Your VOTE is your VOICE! VOTE by Nov. 4!**

## **2025 Endorsements**



#### **WA STATE LEGISLATURE**



Senate District 5 Victoria Hunt



District 26 Deb Krishnadasan Tina Orwall



Senate District 33



King County Executive \*Dual Endorsement!\* Claudia Balducci and Girmay Zahilay

KING COUNTY



PROTECT/ MEMBER City Council Position 7 Rocco DeVito



House District 33 Edwin Obras



Senate District 34 Emily Alvarado



House District 34 Brianna Thomas



District 1 Rod Dembowski



County Council County Council District 3 Sarah Perry



House District 41 Janice Zahn



House District 48 Osman Salahuddin



Senate District 48 Vandana Slatter

#### CITY OF SEATTLE



Mayor Katie Wilson



City Attorney Erika Evans



**FOR** PORTLAND. **OREGON** 

City Council Zac Zappone

CITY OF SPOKANE



'YES' on **Portland** Parks Levy!



City Council Position 9 Dionne Foster



School Board District 4 Joe Mizrahi





Professional and Technical Employees Local 17

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