

Insight

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An Information Pipeline for Members and

Friends of Local 17



WSDOT Members Make
Mountain Passes Safer

Local 17 Awards
Three Scholarships

Legislative Session
Preview: Get Ready!





On the Cover:

Members at the Washington State Department of Transportation help keep the mountain passes safe. Clark County gets tentative agreement; and King County member sings and protects the rivers. Read more in this issue. ■

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Local 17 Contributes to Food Banks



This holiday season, Local 17 contributed almost \$8000 to food banks in Washington and Oregon to help families in need. It's just one more way Local 17 supports communities where members work.

Insight

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Joe McGee, Local 17
Executive Director

On to the New Year!

I can't believe how fast we are running out of year in 2012. As I write this there are just a few weeks left and by the time you read it, it may well have ended. Just amazing! Time can move so fast. But it's been a largely positive year for our union. And I can more confidently say that—and with much relief—now that the election is over.

On balance, things look promising for public employees (barring fiscal cliffs). The economic roller coaster we have all been on since 2008 appears to be slowing and leveling. There are some obvious challenges and unknowns (especially for state employees), but now that we have some certainty about who will be running government at various levels, and now that the economy seems to be trending in a better direction, the future looks brighter for those who work in the public sector, and that is good news.

So, on that optimistic note, I'll give you the gift of fewer thoughts and words than usual and conclude by thanking you for your ongoing support of your union. On behalf of the officers and staff of PTE Local 17, best wishes to you and your family for a happy and healthy New Year.

In unity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JG' with a flourish.

Behnaz Nelson Named Labor Liaison to the King County ADR Program

Behnaz Nelson, Local 17 Deputy Executive Director, was recently named the Labor Liaison to the King County Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Program. Dave Freiboth, Executive Secretary of the King County Labor Council, appointed Nelson to serve in that capacity.

The King Co. ADR Program, also known as the Inter-Local Conflict Resolution Group, was funded through a joint effort between the King Co. Labor Council and the King Co. Executive. ADR provides training, facilitation, mediation, and dispute resolution services to county government, unions and a variety of other organizations. ■

Local 17 Trustee Wins Award

Congratulations to Trustee Hossein Barahimi who was recently honored at the 2012 Diamond Awards (in collaboration with the Governor's Commute Smart Awards) at the state capitol. Barahimi won a Diamond Award for Leadership for his work at King County. ■



Pierce County Back in Negotiations

For the first time since 2008, Local 17 members at Pierce County are back in full contract negotiations mode. Since February, Local 17 members have been surveying members, electing the bargaining team and training. The negotiations began in October. The Engineers and Supervisors contracts are being bargained by Local 17 Union Representative Roberta Burnett and Natalie Kaminski, along with members Troy Lee, Mark Holden and Mike Manley. The biggest issues are: health care increases, COLA, and the County's interest in changing the lay-off language regarding bumping. ■

Life After Work: Gino Lucchetti



Gino Lucchetti, an environmental scientist and a lyric tenor, improvises a streamside serenade on the lower part of the Cedar River in Renton. (John Lok/The Seattle Times)

King County environmental scientist, Gino Lucchetti, is a busy man. With two passions in life, he spends his days in the outdoors monitoring our streams and rivers, and his nights on stage as a professional opera singer in performances around the Puget Sound.

As a child, Lucchetti was surrounded by music. Both of his parents sang in local operas and musicals, and he sang a variety of music throughout his high school and college years. He became more serious about developing his operatic voice during college after he sang in the chorus of Verdi's *Requiem* at the University of Washington, and especially after hearing Luciano Pavarotti sing on television.

During his opera career, Lucchetti had the opportunity to train with coaches from the Metropolitan Opera in New York City—all of whom thought he could make it as a professional tenor there. He ultimately chose to stay in the Seattle area for several reasons, one of them being his rewarding job with King County.

"In addition to the great people I get to work with at the county, universities, and other agencies, I really enjoy meeting with the public and helping citizens understand specific environmental issues and concerns," says Lucchetti.

So during the day, Lucchetti pursues his passion for the environment, and at night he sings—which, he admits, doesn't leave time for much else, especially the hiking and fly-fishing that he also loves to do. But late this summer, before a demanding schedule of work, rehearsal for Skagit Opera's production of *Pagilacci*, and preparing songs for the Seattle Italian Festival, Lucchetti managed to fit in a nine-day hike in the Olympic Mountains, his favorite place to be outdoors.

Lucchetti is in high-demand for performances all around Puget Sound. He performs monthly in Bellevue with Public Opera. He will also be playing King Kaspar in Giancarlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* this January, performing some of the works of Puccini with the Bremerton Symphony in February, and will be singing the title role in Verdi's *Otello* with the Puget Sound Concert Opera in May. You can find more information about his upcoming performances on his website at: www.ginolucchetti.com. ■

Local 17 Awards Three Scholarships in 2012



Scholarship winners Jennifer Callanan, Kayla O'Sullivan, and Michaela Patton, from left to right.

Local 17 is proud to announce not one, not two, but three scholarship recipients for the 2012 award.

The opportunity to give the awards—which Vice-President Lois Watt described as the “perfect storm” at this November’s REC—presented itself when the top three candidates scored within two points of each other, and money budgeted for elections was freed for use due to an uncontested union officer election. The awards were \$3000 each.

Local 17 Executive Director Joe McGee expressed satisfaction about the local being in the position to resolve a virtual three-way tie “in the best possible way.”

This year’s recipients are Jennifer Callanan, Kayla O’Sullivan, and Michaela Patton. Callanan is the daughter of Pam Sienkiewich-Callanan, an engineer who works for the Washington State Department of Transportation, Tacoma Chapter; O’Sullivan is the daughter of Seattle City Light engineer and Seattle Chapter President, Dan O’Sullivan; and Patton is the daughter of Amy Patton, Transportation Planner for the City of Seattle.

The applications are judged by outside labor educators who assign a score based on the applicant's community service, extracurricular activities, academic achievement, educational goals and their essay about being a member of a union family.

Jennifer Callanan

Callanan, who graduated from Steilacoom High School last June, is studying animal science at Washington State University (WSU). As an active member of the Future Farmers of America (FFA) and the WSU Dairy Club, in addition to being the Washington State Alternate Dairy Ambassador, Callanan is following her passion to work with dairy cattle. She hopes to conduct undergraduate research in animal genetics and reproduction starting next year.

When talking about the scholarship, Callanan is very thankful. “[Local 17’s] support provides the extra boost and confidence that I need to make a difference in the industry that I am so passionate about,” she says.

Kayla O’Sullivan

O’Sullivan graduated from Kennedy Catholic High School in Burien in June 2012 and is now attending Gonzaga University in Spokane. She is on a pre-med track, majoring in Biology and minoring in music—she has been playing the violin for over eight years, and the piano for 11.

“At Gonzaga, I am fortunate to study both biology and music, as I have had passions for both music and science throughout my life,” she wrote.

In her essay, O’Sullivan cites her father as inspiration for her community involvement: “My dad’s participation in the union has taught me to seek involvement within my community and strive to help others.”

The scholarship, O’Sullivan says, will help fund her education so that she can follow her dreams.

Michaela Patton

After graduating from Thomas Jefferson High School in Auburn in June, Patton packed her bags and moved across the country to attend Savannah State University in Georgia, where she will be playing for their softball team while studying Civil and Environmental Engineering.

Patton’s ultimate goal is to return to Washington State after graduating to pursue a career in public service like both of her parents—her father, Brian Patton, was a former Local 17 member who now plays a management role at Seattle Public Utilities.

Patton says that her parents would not have had the same opportunities to succeed without the protection of Local 17.

In her essay, she likens the union to a sports team: “One person cannot win the game all by themselves. Each member [of the team] is valued, and the team strives for fairness and equality. This is winning the game of life, or in other words, achieving the American Dream.” ■

City of Seattle Prepares for Negotiations: Bargaining Team Sought

The year 2013 is sneaking up fast and furious. All three City of Seattle contracts expire on Dec. 31 2013.

This time next year, the City bargaining teams will be at the table participating in the process that can be challenging and rewarding at the same time.

"It is imperative that we be organized and ready to achieve gains for our members," said Local 17 Union Representative Diana Douglas, "City of Seattle employees have done their part during this recession to help the City weather the storm. They have furloughed, reduced the COLA floor, experienced the pain of layoffs and reduction in hours, as well as pay more into their Retirement System. They are all doing more with less and still serving the public every day with the same dedication they had before the recession hit."

Now it is the City's turn to acknowledge what employees have contributed. It can do that by negotiating in good faith a new Labor Agreement that restores the two percent COLA floor, maintains good health care benefits and works with the Co-

alition of City Unions to restore the health of the Retirement System without gutting the benefits.

In early spring, the Local 17 City Team will be calling on members to step up and participate in the upcoming bargaining process.

Local 17 Union Representatives will be recruiting members who are interested in participating in the process as well as taking responsibility of representing the whole memberships' interest, not just their own. There will be a role for every interested member who wants to be involved. Look for information in your mailbox and on the Local 17, City of Seattle website.

In the meantime, attending City of Seattle Chapter meetings is a good way to share information with your fellow Union members. The Chapter meets the second Thursday of each month at noon.

Douglas concluded: "Bring your ideas and energy. We have a lot of work ahead of us, but we also have smart members and we have a unity in purpose. Be a part of that unity." ■

City of Seattle Stewards Get Trained

IN AUGUST, LOCAL 17 PRESENTED A "STEWARD TRAINING 101" FOR NEW AND CURRENT STEWARDS AT THE CITY OF SEATTLE, INCLUDING SEVERAL FROM GROUPS THAT HAD RECENTLY ORGANIZED INTO LOCAL 17.

The lunch time training was held in Seattle City Hall and was led by Lisa Jacobs, Local 17 Union Representative. She provided an overview of the roles and responsibilities of Stewards and provided highlights of the contract that most impact Stewards. She also touched on the grievance process, the importance of Duty of Fair Representation, and email privacy issues.

"We appreciate those that attended for taking the time to



be Stewards and coming to the training. Their participation and support of Local 17 is critical in effectively representing and engaging members. It was also exciting to see so many newly organized members already stepping up to be leaders," commented Jacobs.

Said Gigi Meinig, one of the Planning and Development Specialists who recently organized with Local 17: "I found the contract highlights very helpful in better understanding the collective bargaining agreement. I also appreciated the focus on our bringing balance and fairness to the role."

This training is the first in a series of lunchtime trainings for City of Seattle Stewards. A "Just Cause" Training (Dec. 11) and a Weingarten and Fact Finding Meeting" (Jan. 15) will be held. Contact Nikola Davidson (nikola@pte17.org) to RSVP. ■

Victory for Local 17 IT Professionals at the City of Seattle

IN LATE OCTOBER, LOCAL 17 LEARNED THAT THE CITY OF SEATTLE'S CLASSIFICATION & COMPENSATION (CLASS COMP) UNIT HAD DEVELOPED A DRAFT DOCUMENT THAT WOULD CHANGE THE WAY THAT LAYOFFS WOULD TAKE PLACE FOR HUNDREDS OF IT PROFESSIONALS.

Details were presented in a draft that would take the classification system from one of three (3) titles: IT A, IT B, and IT C to eighteen (18) different occupational groupings for each of those titles. This would affect more than 240 members.

Although it was the first time that Local 17 had seen the groupings, the City said it planned to legislate the new titles early in 2013.

Stewards who attended the meeting expressed their concerns, including the short turn-around time, the groupings themselves, what the groupings would mean for their bargaining unit regarding the work they could be assigned and what it would mean for future layoffs.

A primary concern was that this would effectively create as many as 18 or 36 layoff groups in each department—18 for the IT B's and the same 18 for the IT C's.

When the Union Representative, Patti Kieval explained that the City had no right to legislate such a change when the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) was closed, the City took the position that it was merely a "re-titling or re-organization," and that its only obligation was to bargain the impacts of the change. Although it offered to meet again with Local 17 to refine the groupings, the City did not admit that this was a mandatory subject of bargaining both the decision and the impacts.

Kieval asked the City Labor Negotiators for a meeting, and laid out several concerns: the closed contract;

➤ continued on page 7



COPPEA Officers Elected

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NEWLY ELECTED 2013 COPPEA OFFICERS.

Gerry Verhoef was elected to serve a second term as COPPEA President with newly elected Secretary, Mark Bello, who also holds the



position of Past President.

Rachel Whiteside, Vice President and Paul Cone, Treasurer, will continue through

2013 and their positions will be up for re-election next fall. The COPPEA Officers work tirelessly to build solidarity amongst the 700-plus members working throughout downtown Portland and at remote locations.

“The synergy of the officers shows in their ability to continuously draw in over 40 members to monthly meetings to provide important labor-management news and receive feedback and direction,” stated Behnaz Nelson, COPPEA Union Representative. ■

↳ continued from page 6

the short timeline; the major change this would mean for members’ seniority for purposes of layoff; the impact to what assignments could be given to members under the proposed new system; the flaws in the groupings themselves; and the negative reactions of many of the City’s IT Directors and Managers.

Kieval asked that the City reconsider, and hold off until contract bargaining to bring this issue to the table. She requested that there be discussions in a labor management context (not bargaining) to identify what problems they were trying to solve and to collaborate on creating a solution that works for everyone.

After considering the request, the City pulled back its timeline and is working with Local 17 to set up a labor-management committee to work on this issue together. ■

COPPEA Negotiations Team Set and Contract Survey Underway

COPPEA HEADS TO THE BARGAINING TABLE IN JANUARY 2013 TO NEGOTIATE A SUCCESSOR CONTRACT TO THE AGREEMENT EXPIRING ON JUNE 30, 2013.

Serving with Chief Spokesperson Behnaz Nelson are: Gerry Verhoef (Parks), Rachel Whiteside (BDS), Mark Bello (BDS) and John Wilson (PBOT). Paul Cone (PBOT) and Jamie Wilde (Water) will support the team as alternates.

“I want to be part of the bargaining process so that I can be part of something bigger than myself, so that I can help resolve the concerns of our members, my fellow colleagues,” said member John Wilson.

A survey has been crafted to capture COPPEA’s interests and issues for the negotiating team to consider. The survey can be accessed from the members-only section of the COPPEA website at www.coppea.org. In addition to monthly meetings and frequent communications, the contract survey is the most valuable tool a bargaining team can arm themselves with before facing management across the table.

COPPEA remains one of the most respected and highly regarded unions due to its professionalism and dedication to the citizens of Portland. ■

Clark County Gets Contract

As of November, the Engineers and Appraisers had reached a three-year tentative agreement with many gains at Clark County. Some of the highlights include:



“For the first time in many years, AFSME Local 335, rejoined the Coalition after years of absence, so negotiations was special,” said Local 17 Union Representative

- Cost-of-living adjustment (COLA): 1.75 percent in 2013, 2 percent in 2014 and 2015.
- The Employer will pay 7 percent of the health care premium increases for the next three years.

Roberta Burnett.

Led by Burnett, the bargaining team pictured below included: Pam Mason, Ron Kerlin, Cary Armstrong, Greg Peterson, Mary Howells and Carla Simmons (pictured in center photo). ■



Regional Executive Committee Meets

MORE THAN 100 PEOPLE ATTENDED THE NOV. 10 REGIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (REC) MEETING AT THE PLUMBERS HALL IN RENTON, DURING WHICH MUCH IMPORTANT WORK OF THE UNION WAS DONE.

Local 17 President Allan Yamaguchi opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and getting the minutes of the prior meeting passed.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director McGee thanked members and staff for attending. He also touched on a few staff changes including the addition of Annie Costello, Deidre Girard, Yoko Kuramoto-Eidsmoe and the promotion of Behnaz Nelson to Deputy Executive Director. McGee also acknowledged the retirement of Local 17 Union Representative Bill Kalibak and the departure of Carrie Blackwood and Janet Parks.

McGee summarized a few of the recent contract settlements and the important election victories whose outcomes were important to public employees.

"The overall good news is that the result of the elections means we are not going to have people at the state and federal level who are out to make war with us," McGee said.



Jeff Straughn



Bob Kelley

Financial Report

Secretary-Treasurer Sean Simmons gave the financial report detailing the Local's pro-rated budget with revenue and expenditures.

Political Action Report

Trustee Ray Ceaser went over the Political Action Fund balance. Ceaser reminded delegates that all contributions to the Political Action fund are voluntary. A few REC delegates encouraged members to donate to the fund.

Election Report

Local 17 Election Chair and Operations Director Anthony Davidson noted that there was only one candidate nominated to each office so there was no need to hold an election. (Savings were used to fund additional scholarships, see story on page 5). Lois Watt will serve as President (current President Allan Yamaguchi did not seek re-election) and Hossein Barahimi will continue to serve as Trustee since he was unopposed. The new terms of office commence in March 2013.

Contract Settlement Reports

Local 17 Union Representatives talked about completed settlements: Whitney Hupf (along with members Jeff Straughn and Peg Taglianetti, King County IT and Admin contracts); Adrienne Thompson (along with member Sid Forman, King County Public Health); Roberta Burnett (along with Suzanne Hyde, Chelan Douglas Health District); Annie Costello



Bill Kalibak

(Benton-Franklin Health District) and Behnaz Nelson (along with members Don Gauthier, Jake Jacobovitch, Fred White King County, 17A).

State Team Representatives Kristen Kussmann and Vince Oliveri (along with several other bargaining team members) told the story of their recent negotiations.

Legislative Report

Legislative Directors Vince Oliveri and Adrienne Thompson summarized major election outcomes that will have an impact on public employees and how Local 17 played a part in this.

Scholarship Report

Vice President Lois Watt announced the 2012 scholarship winners. (See page 4).

Organizing Report

Special Projects Coordinator Nikola Davidson discussed major organizing victories at City of Seattle and the state Department of Transportation.

Honoring Bill Kalibak

Joe McGee, Vince Oliveri, and President Allan Yamaguchi paid tribute to recently retired Union Representative Bill Kalibak and a short slide show was presented.

"Bill had 32 years of solid, consistent and exemplary service. He is a mentor and friend and the consummate union representative. I thank him deeply and sincerely," McGee said.

Good of the Order

REC delegate Bob "PAC Man" Kelley was honored with a Gold Card for his many years of service to Local 17. He was prolific in his efforts to help build the Local 17 Political Action Fund.

RSVP Drawing

An RSVP drawing was held for delegates who confirmed their meeting attendance by the deadline. ■

WSDOT Employees Keep Mountain Passes Safe

THE ROAD TO STEVENS PASS MAY BE A LITTLE SAFER THANKS TO WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (WSDOT) EMPLOYEES LIKE SUE WARREN. Warren and her crew, who work at the Wenatchee project office, just completed one section of a major project on Stevens Pass. The US 2 Stevens Pass West Slope Stabilizing project will be done in three sections.

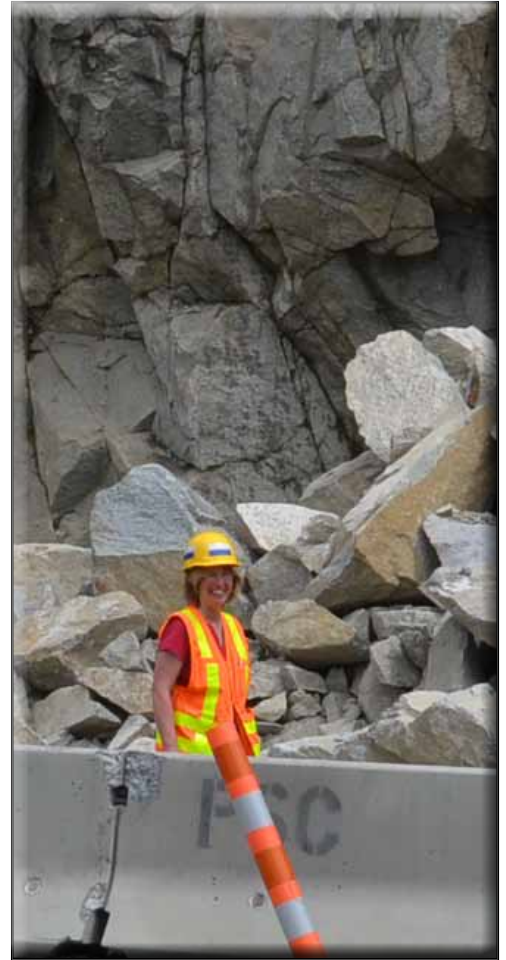
The first part, which ran from May to November, preserved four different rock slopes along US 2 in a three-mile section from the Stevens Pass Summit (west) to reduce the potential for loose rocks to roll down onto the roadway, thereby creating driving hazards.

The project was particularly challenging because it involved mountain weather conditions and was located at 4,000 feet of elevation. It also involved debris removal, scaling of loose rocks from the slopes and installing rock bolts and steel cable netting.

Warren has worked most of her career at WSDOT and is interesting because she has worked both the administrative and the engineering sides.

“I started my career with WSDOT as a secretary and then moved over into the engineering side after seven years. I then worked in the field for the next nine years and then moved back into the office doing contract administration. This was my first year back in the field after six years of contract administration,” said Warren.

Now, she one of the few women engineers to oversee huge highway projects across the state. Warren is one of the dedicated, highly skilled, employees who are members of Local 17 and who help keep Washington drivers safe. ■



Kitsap Public Health District Members Ratify a new Collective Bargaining Agreement

WITH A CONTRACT EXPIRING DEC. 31, 2012, STEWARDS AT THE KITSAP PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT HAVE BEEN WORKING DILIGENTLY TO COMPLETE BARGAINING AND HAVE MEMBERSHIP RATIFICATION PRIOR TO THE END OF THE YEAR.

Local 17 Union Representative Adrienne Thompson, who helped negotiate this contract said: “Special thanks to Brandy Amundson, Betti Ridge, Linda Terry, and Shawn Ultican for volunteering their time and efforts to advocate for members at the bargaining table.”

Many gains were made during this contract cycle. Thompson added that members at Kitsap faced zero percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for the past three years, except for some classifications that received some minor adjustments in the first year of the agreement. Some highlights include:

- A three year agreement that included wage increases of two percent on Jan. 1, 2013, 1.5 percent on Jan. 1, 2014, and one percent on Jan. 1, 2015;
- A new program for Continuing Education that guarantees the District compensate employees for required license/certification and paid time for the hours needed for CLE classes;
- The ability to carry over Comp Time;
- Step children added to bereavement leave;
- District paying Administrative Leave for two consecutive days per incident during Inclement Weather & Emergency Closure;
- Modifications to the health care plan that include eliminating sunset language for those who choose the District’s plan and exchanging health care dollars to wages that will compound in future years.

“It is always amazing to work with fantastic members who provide direct services to the community,” state Thompson. “With a desire to continue to provide these services, the approach members took this year in negotiations was an inspiration to us all, despite these ongoing difficult economic times.”

Members at Kitsap Public Health can now focus on advocacy to maintain these programs as we face a difficult legislative session in Olympia. ■



King County IT Members Get Trained

SINCE THE KING COUNTY INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) REORGANIZATION AND SUBSEQUENT BARGAINING UNIT CONSOLIDATION EARLIER THIS YEAR, THE LOCAL 17 IT BARGAINING UNIT HAS A NEW COMPOSITION OF STEWARDS, INCLUDING MORE THAN 300 MEMBERS.

Local 17 Union Representative Whitney Hupf said many are experienced stewards, but haven't worked together as a team. In late October, Hupf held two Steward trainings to refresh roles, rights and responsibilities to kick-off the new IT era.

"Steward training was a great opportunity to get to know each other better and build a team of resources for our union family," said IT member Marlon Brown.

About 15 stewards attended each training, and in addition to the basic training curriculum, since many of them were seasoned stewards, the trainings often became more of a conversation about typical workplace challenges and how stewards have handled them in the past, lending ideas to others for the future.

The group also contemplated future issues members are expecting to face and are preparing the 2013 bargaining unit agenda, which includes, performance appraisal reform, employee development, business and technology planning and employer background checks. ■

King County Transit Administrative Support Contract Ratified

After almost nine months of negotiating and two mediation sessions, the King County Transit Administrative Support Bargaining Unit ratified a three year contract.

The most difficult issues to resolve during negotiations were compensation and layoff language. While the bargaining unit agreed to a very good cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for each year of the contract, the greatest gain was in the area of layoffs.

The previous Transit Administrative Support Contract divided the bargaining unit into 12 distinct layoff groups based on sections within the division, meaning that, an employees' location in the organization often determined an individuals susceptibility to layoff, rather than their overall seniority. The problem with this approach is clear when you consider that three of these layoff groups only contained a single person, and nine of the 12 contained three or fewer. Thus, in the event of layoff, management had the ability to target an employee who may be more senior than most of the bargaining unit, simply because they were in there own layoff group or a small layoff group. At the start of negotiations, management proposed expanding the layoff groups from 12 to 14, further minimizing the importance of seniority.

With a strong resolve, the bargaining team continued to hammer management on the inequity of this system, eventually prevailing by reaching an agreement to get rid of layoff groups entirely. Under the new reduction in force provision, layoff groups no longer exist, placing every employee in the unit on equal footing.

The new provision allows for the most senior employee to bump the least senior in the same classification (no matter the section) or a lower classification in the same series. The County also acknowledges that every bargaining unit member in a given classification series is qualified to work in any other section in the same classification or a lower classification in the same series. When it becomes clear through bargaining that salary increases are not possible it's important to remember that the inability to pay can be used as leverage to achieve working condition and security provisions. Here, that pivot resulted in greatly improved job security through the improvement of the layoff provision and a ratification. The bargaining team was led by Local 17 Union Representative Jacob Metzger along with Carrie Elwell, Beverly Nitz, Collette Fidencaro and Mary Fernandez. ■

Tacoma Gets Health Care Agreement

Tacoma Joint Labor, which includes Local 17, recently settled its health care plan which included many gains for union employees at the City of Tacoma.

"We are pleased with the agreement. We, for the most part, maintained benefits and premium share. We created a Joint Labor Committee to oversee and participate in a RFP (request for proposals) for insurance carriers for benefits offered in 2014," said Roberta Burnett Local 17 Union Representative.

Other highlights include:

- The City will cover 2013 health care increases (i.e. instead of increasing the premium share).
- The employer will pay a one-time lump sum of \$360 to phase out the \$30 a month contribution into the Flexible Spending Account.
- The deductible for Washington Dental plan will be eliminated for employees using the Preferred Provider network.
- Joint Labor and the City will actively pursue a wellness committee to help improve the health of employees. ■

Unions and County Reach Sustainable Agreement on Employee Health Care Costs

ON THE HEELS OF AN UNEXPECTED PRESS RELEASE DELIVERED BY THE KING COUNTY EXECUTIVE AND THE CO-CHAIRS OF THE LABOR MANAGEMENT INSURANCE COMMITTEE, UNION MEMBERS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTY GATHERED TO HEAR THE DETAILS OF A LANDMARK HEALTH CARE AGREEMENT AFFECTING 66 PERCENT OF KING COUNTY'S WORKFORCE.

The Coalition of King County Unions held the meeting to discuss what this important settlement means to employees.

"The health care meeting was extremely informative and the members of the coalition owe a debt of gratitude to our representatives on the health care committee for the incredible results they have achieved," said Fred White, Local 17 member and steward. "To reach agreement in the current economic climate without premium sharing or increased co-pays is outstanding. The presentation was readily understandable and presenters were informed and able to answer every question posed. I am very thankful we have such dedicated and able representation."

What the agreement means

The agreement means that any increase in King County's cost for providing employee health care will be capped at four percent a year, a rate that is almost half the projected increase in costs in the local health care market. A press conference was held to discuss the agreement.



"This deal resulted from a process of labor and management bringing our respective interests to the table to address a shared problem – the rising costs of health care," said Whitney Hupf, co-chair of the Joint Labor Management Insurance Committee (JLMIC) and Local 17 Union Representative. "We were open-minded and not wedded to any particular outcome, and this allowed us to reach a deal that we can both be excited about – on behalf of labor, management and the public interest."

"Predictability in health care costs means better ensuring a high level of services to the people of King County," said Executive Constantine. "This is good for the public, and good for public employees."

The three-year agreement, which takes effect in 2014 will cover two-thirds of all County employees. Should catastrophic events or other factors cause the County's costs to exceed that cap, the difference will be paid from a new \$25 million reserve fund that will be created from past health care savings. The reserve fund will be managed jointly by the County and employee unions to help keep employee benefits and out-of-pocket expenses the same.

If costs increase at a rate lower than four percent, the savings go into the reserve fund. Employees will also continue to receive a financial incentive for choosing lower-cost quality health care providers like Group Health.

"This demonstrates the employee commitment to a financially sustainable County," said Dustin Frederick, co-chair of the Joint Labor Management Insurance Committee and business manager for the Public Safety Employees Union Local 519. "This negotiation outcome was a reflection of a true partnership."

Through their participation in King County's successful Healthy Incentives



wellness program, employees will continue to keep down the cost of their own health care. Healthy Incentives has saved the public nearly \$46 million in anticipated costs projected between 2007 and 2011:

- \$14.6 million through improvements in employee health,
- \$6.5 million from employees selecting high-quality, low-cost health care through Group Health, and
- \$24.7 million from employees choosing generic medications when possible, and paying more out-of-pocket toward health care costs.

As a result, King County has experienced lower-than-average increases in health care costs over the last two years: 4.4 percent in 2011, and an actual decrease of 5.5 percent in 2010. However, changes in the health care environment will continue to put pressure on costs.

The County and labor unions will meet annually to review the performance of the health care package and use of the jointly-managed reserve fund.

About 51 percent of King County employees are represented by the unions that worked toward this sustainable reform through the JLMIC.

The agreement also covers the County's non-represented employees who comprise another 15 percent of the workforce, meaning the reform will cover 66 percent of all employees. ■

Lessons Learned on the Highest Mountain and on the Ocean Waves

Staff Perspective:

By Taryn Gerhardt,
PTE 17 Communications Director

In December, I will celebrate 13 years as Communications Director at Local 17. Before that, I worked at many other businesses and organizations—none of which treated me half as well as Local 17.

In fact, I have been working in the journalism field for more than 20 years (counting my first internship at my town's local newspaper and also my first job as a newsletter editor at an aluminum plant.) Some would say that I am old, but I prefer to say that I am "wise"—or at least a little "wiser" than before. That's because this summer I was lucky enough to take a block of time off and it changed the way I see the world. What I learned would have never been possible without taking it consecutively.

But before we get to that, let's talk about how I got time off to learn these lessons. First, like you, I have a union contract, which has language about leave—how much, how I accrue it and how I use it. By having a union contract, we set the standard for workers everywhere. As union members, we fight to hold on to these standards in contract negotiations.

Secondly, I work for a top notch organization that is well-managed. At PTE17, Executive Director Joe McGee leads a crew of professionals who take great pride in their work and who do it to a very high standard every day. McGee makes important decisions that are in members' best interest and that provide the optimal service to members. PTE also has a top notch Executive Board who add their talents and insights to the mix. One great decision was to hire a Deputy Communications Director to help expand and enhance the Local 17 communications department and ensure opportunities to keep members abreast of important union issues through a myriad of channels. I was very fortunate and grateful to have the support of the Executive Director, Executive Board, Deputy Communications Director and my co-workers, so I could come back to PTE with great energy and good ideas for the future.

What I Learned

Some people (wiser than me) probably already know these things. However, it took an extended vacation to get this kind of old-world knowledge. So here goes: I learned that the Milky Way runs east to west. You learn this when you sleep in the open air on the Pacific Ocean far away from ambient light. I learned that time beats slower and the days are longer when you engage in your passions and live true to yourself. I learned that being in the elements 24/7 makes you understand how fragile life is and how fortunate we are to be alive at any given moment. The value of time changes completely when you appreciate it and know that your days are finite. You are different when you are not busy with your "busy-ness" and your endless "to do" lists that never quite get done. You become more free when you aren't constantly worried. I learned that teaching other people what you know and watching them succeed is more rewarding than just living your own passions. I also learned what "mud honey" is . . . and if you don't know, ask me. It's a good story. ■



Arbitration Victory: RIF Rights

A RECENT ARBITRATION DECISION HELPS PROTECT LOCAL 17 MEMBERS FROM BEING BUMPED BY MANAGERS DURING A REDUCTION IN FORCE (RIF).

On Sept. 8, Arbitrator Marvin Schurke ruled that a Transportation Planning Specialist 4 (TPS4) could not bump a Local 17 member Transportation Planning Specialist 3 (TPS 3). Management's action in "bumping" the TPS 3 and placing the TPS 4 in the position, therefore, violated Local 17's contract with the State of Washington.

Management had argued that its action was proper because a WAC (civil service rule) allows non-represented state employees in a RIF to bump into any position in their "class series." In his decision, Schurke said that the employer's interpretation is incorrect, as far as bumping into Local 17 bargaining unit classifications.

The union argued that its contractual rights govern how non-members can become members of the bargaining unit, and that the collective bargaining agreement does not allow this sort of bumping.

Schurke agreed with the union, reasoning: "To justify the outcome it desires in this case, the employer would have needed to negotiate for and obtain the union's agreement on contract language explicitly giving non-represented persons a right to 'bump' into the bargaining unit. . . . [T]he absence of such language from the parties' contract is fatal to the employer's case."

Kristen Kussmann, Union Representative, represented Local 17 at the arbitration. Other Local 17 staff and members also contributed to the arbitration including: Vince Oliveri,

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Wenatchee Training

Public Affairs Training Continues

IN 2012, LOCAL 17 INITIATED A NEW PROGRAM TO EDUCATE MEMBERS REGARDING INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

The goal of the program is to have members recognize the importance and impact that elected officials can have on our work lives and turn that knowledge into political activism on public employee issues.

The training has two segments. The first segment provides members with examples of how the service they provide as public employees is affected by state and local government legislation. This hour-long training was provided to hundreds of members throughout the state. Legislative Directors Adrienne Thompson and Vince Oliveri traveled the state to bring the training to members in their home locales.

The second phase was designed to provide members with ideas regarding how to communicate with elected officials.

Initial sessions were held with state WSDOT members at Shoreline and Wenatchee. The sessions included high-ranking elected officials from the legislative transportation committees in state government as well as Congressman Rick Larsen. They talked to members on focused issues regarding the value of public employees and how members can best communicate with elected officials on issues of concern.

The training will be an ongoing service and not be limited to election year activity. Local 17 expects to elevate public affairs activity to the same level of importance that members place on contract negotiations and administration.

“As public employees, we must recognize that public affairs can affect our work life just as much as our collective bargaining agreement does,” said Thompson.

Look for training to continue in 2013. Contact our public affairs staff for more info: <http://pte17publicaffairs.org>. ■

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Natalie Kaminski, Yoko Kuramoto-Eidsmoe, Steve Morgans, and the grievant, Maria Mayrhofer. Oliveri, Morgans, and Maryhofer provided testimony at the arbitration.

Kussmann said, “Local 17 members are the true winners here. This represents a victory in the midst of the reductions-in-force that are happening at WSDOT.”

Grievant Maria Mayrhofer said, “I not only brought this grievance forward for myself fearing future RIFs and future bumping, but for other Local 17 members at WSDOT. The possibility of being bumped by a non-represented employee impacts other members as well. It is very good that these rules are clarified.” ■

State Health Benefits Update

Master Agreement Ratified Health care Contract Stalled

Local 17 state employees ratified their 2013 – 2015 master agreement on Oct. 1.

Improvements included the end of the three percent across-the-board salary cut endured by members over the term of the current contract. The new agreement also included a new salary step to be added onto the state compensation plan. The contract is subject to legislative approval during the upcoming legislative session that begins in January. Once approved, it will take effect on July 1, 2013.

Though the master agreement has been settled, the state employee health care contract remains unresolved. This issue is negotiated by a coalition of state employee unions that includes Local 17 staff.

The parties remain stalemated due to the State’s most recent proposal. Though they have proposed to maintain the premium-sharing ratio (85 percent State /15 percent employee), they seek to maintain a cap on their current monthly contribution of \$850 per month, per member for the full two-year contract term.

The effect of the cap would place the responsibility of any plan increases directly onto state employees. The coalition of unions rejected this proposal in September.

Local 17 staff will be working with the legislature to attain approval of the master contract and continues to search for a resolution to the healthcare issue.

The current status of the negotiations can be found at:

<http://pte17statenegotiations2012.org>.

Legislative updates appear at <http://pte17publicaffairs.org>. ■

2013 State Legislative Session Preview: Get Ready!

ON JAN. 14, LAWMAKERS WILL MEET IN OLYMPIA TO BEGIN THE 2013 LEGISLATIVE SESSION IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE MUCH HAS CHANGED, YET MUCH REMAINS THE SAME.

The November elections provided a change in the Governor's office and though some senior legislators lost re-election, the make-up of the House of Representatives (55 Democrats (Ds) vs. 43 Republicans (Rs)) remains about the same while things have tightened up in the Senate (26 Ds vs. 23 Rs).

Legislative business in the House should not be much different than previous years where Democrats have maintained a substantial majority. However, the Senate will again be vulnerable to potential takeover by the minority party if two or more Democrats cross over to do business with the Republicans and topple the slim democratic majority as occurred during the 2012 Supplemental Budget debate.

Though outgoing Governor Gregoire is required to provide a budget proposal to the legislature prior to the new session, the impact of her lame duck proposal is questionable. At the same time, the potential influence of Governor-elect Jay Inslee remains to be seen as he attempts to hit the ground running when sworn in on Jan. 14.

Economic Forecast

The latest economic forecast will also play a major role in the crafting of the 2013 – 2015 General Fund budget. The November forecast noted a \$900 million shortfall in revenues for the coming two-year budget cycle. Though the shortfall is significant, by comparison to budget difficulties over the past four years, it points to an improving economy, albeit at a very slow, vulnerable pace. Unfortunately, a new element will add an additional burden to balancing the state budget. Last year, the state Supreme Court ruled that the state was not meeting its constitutional requirement to adequately fund basic K-12 education. The Court ordered lawmakers to come



Members from our Spokane County and Health District chapters at the annual Spokane County Labor rally pause from the festivities for a photo.

up with a plan to fully fund education by 2017, which could cost up to \$6 billion. There is an expectation that a down payment be made of at least \$1 billion in the coming two-year budget cycle.

During the election there was much political discourse that ran the spectrum of possible remedies to solve the ongoing budget crisis, which ranged from deeper service cuts to raising revenue through closing tax loopholes or by increasing taxes. With the passage of yet another Tim Eyman anti-tax initiative along with the make-up of the 2013 Legislature, raising new revenue could prove to be very difficult.

There is no doubt that the solutions to this issue will have impact on many programs and direct services provided by Local 17 members, including those in Public Health and Human Services. This could include proposals that may also impact the compensation package for state employees and the pension (PERS) and healthcare benefits (PEBB) of participating local government and state employees. The Local 17 state employee

contract will also be up for ratification by the legislature.

Transportation

In transportation, Local 17 expects debate on a possible new funding proposal. Local 17 staff will be lobbying on this issue in support of all members working in transportation, including local road and transit agencies as well as state agencies.

"We will also be working on transportation budget issues that affect the staffing at WSDOT, as layoffs will occur if the budget is absent of new funding. Any new funding proposal would also trigger debate regarding delivery of projects including contracting out of projects through Design/Build, as well as a unique method of financing and delivery known as public-private partnerships," said Vince Oliveri, Local 17 Legislative Director.

The transportation debate will be without some of the voices we've been used to hearing on transportation issues as long-time transportation leaders Mary

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Margaret Haugen, Mike Armstrong and Dan Swecker all lost their re-election bids.

In short, there is no doubt that all Local 17 members will be affected by the state legislative session.

What you can do:

During session members should:

- Be prepared to contact legislators on key issues;
- Plan to attend local town hall meetings with legislators in your district; and,
- Come to Olympia to visit your legislator.

The earlier in session you can visit, the better. Local 17 Legislative Directors Adrienne Thompson and Vince Oliveri will be happy to assist you in arranging a meeting with your legislator in your home district or Olympia.

Local 17 will again provide regular reporting on the legislative session via our Public Affairs blog (<http://pte17publicaffairs.org>).

Utilizing your personal email you can sign-up for legislative email alerts that are also posted directly on the blog.

Be informed and be active! Local 17 members' jobs and services to the community depend on it. ■

Your Vote Mattered!

The Governor's race and other legislative races were very close this year, including one Senate race that was separated by 16 votes. Your vote mattered!

Generally, who is elected to the legislature and as Governor determine the type of legislation that is passed. This could include anti-union legislation taking away public employees collective bargaining rights in Washington State. Your vote does matter and has a direct impact on your work life as a public employee. ■



Todd Miller (right), a Tech Specialist at the Spokane Regional Health District, talks with Bob Ferguson (left), a candidate for Washington State Attorney General at the Spokane County Labor Rally. (Ferguson won).

- Be prepared to contact legislators on key issues;
- Plan to attend local town hall meetings with legislators in your district; and,
- Come to Olympia to visit your legislator.

Support Success! Donate to the PAC!



Send your completed form and applicable payment to:

Local 17 PAC
2900 Eastlake Ave. E
Suite 300
Seattle, WA 98102

Questions?
Call:
1-800-783-0017

PTE Local 17 uses the Political Action Fund (PAC) to contribute to political candidates who support working families and Local 17 issues. Local 17 members voluntarily contribute to this fund; union dues money does not go to the PAC. You can use the form below to make your voluntary contribution by credit card, check, or payroll deduction.

Name (please print): _____

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For credit card payments, please fill out the information below:

Please charge \$ _____ to my credit card for contribution to the Local 17 PAC.

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_____ Check here if you would like the above contribution billed to your credit card each month.

For monthly payroll deduction, please fill out the information below:

Please withhold \$ _____ per month from my paychecks to be contributed to the PTE Local 17 PAC.

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Signature _____ Date: _____

This authorization remains in effect until revoked in writing by me. Contributions or gifts to the Local 17 PAC are not tax deductible. No employer or union may discriminate against you for contributing or not contributing to a political committee, or supporting or opposing a candidate, ballot measure or political party.

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Executive Board Point of View

Lois Watt
Local 17 Vice President

This year this column started with President Yamaguchi thanking people who serve Local 17. This attitude of gratitude has continued in one way or another throughout the year. It is also a good way and a customary way to end a year. So let's be grateful for a moment.

Things I am grateful for (in no particular order):

As I write this, the election has ended. I'm grateful the political ads are done. I'm more grateful for the privilege and responsibility I have to vote, which I exercise with pride.

I am also thankful for the things that help make my life comfortable: my family, a home, a good job, the protections I have because I have a union contract to help me keep the job and the ability to provide for my family.

The people who make a difference in my life. They are many. Some I see often. Some I don't see at all, but still have a connection with even though it was made years ago. Some are family. Some are friends. Some are friends who have become family. Some are co-workers or acquaintances.

The things that make my life interesting and joyful: My family, books, cooking, two Papillon dogs, music, and so many more.

I am grateful for the things that make my life challenging: work, Local 17 activities (being a Steward and Union Officer), my garden, and so many more.

It doesn't take much effort to come up with a list of things to be grateful for. And science has proven that an attitude of gratitude can help your overall health, infect the people around you and help you get more of whatever it is that you want. I'll also be grateful if you take a moment to share your gratitude with those around you.

One final thing, thank you to all my fellow Board members, the Executive Director and Deputy Director. Thank you for your continued dedication to the work that we do and for your continued support of me and each other in all that we do. You make participation in Local 17 a pleasure and an adventure every day!

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lois Watt".