



Renton Workers' Activism Helps Win New Contract

Renton workers recently won a strong new contract after showing up in force to demonstrate their unwavering commitment to fair treatment and the bargaining process.

Historically, Renton is a labor friendly city that treats its employees well with fair contracts and adequate cost of living adjustments. However, after a contract with city employees ended last year, Renton had been slow to negotiate a new, fair deal.

While Council 2's negotiations continued sluggishly, Renton did come to an agreement with its police on a new contract, an indicator that a similar deal for city workers should have been around the corner.

But after a promising contract was blown up, and following countless unfruitful offers, exchanges, proposals, and counterproposals, none of which were in line with the new police deal, workers had seen enough. Council 2 and city employees began looking for ways to advocate for and demonstrate the importance of a better contract.

From packing City Council meetings to running a button up drive, workers made themselves heard—and the city listened, eventually leading to mediation where Council 2 and its negotiators made great strides toward an improved deal, including gains like first time language limiting the use of temps.

One piece was still missing—a cost of living adjustment in line with other city contracts as the police had earned. That led to a crossroads point, and an open

meeting with membership, where more than 100 city employees gathered and brought family to discuss their options.

Ultimately—and unanimously—Renton workers decided to keep fighting for equity and for the contract they deserved, committing to increase their advocacy efforts and pressure on the city to get a deal done.

Soon after the meeting, Renton offered a new deal that met Council 2's demands instead of continuing a protracted negotiation process. As a result of their visibility efforts, engagement, and dedication, Renton city employees and Council 2 were able to win a good new contract.

"The key to getting our deal was organizing the membership to attend City Council meetings," said Kristina Raabe, a member of the negotiating team who hopes to be a steward in 2020. "It put City leadership on notice: we want a fair contract and we won't back down. The powerful feeling of standing together is amazing."

Representatives say that successful efforts like this speak to the importance of involving—and trusting—membership in the bargaining process, engaging them on the issues and challenges at hand, and giving them the opportunity to step up and lead.

Contract negotiations can be long and hard fought, but Renton employees' success proves that an engaged team and community can make a big difference.



Maintaining Clout at the Bargaining Table



CHRIS DUGOVICH

Our clout at the bargaining table is clearly something that the anti-public employee Freedom Foundation is trying to wipe out. Since the Supreme Court decision, the challenges have become numerous, but the good news is we are doing better than anyone could have predicted. Fortunately, our state legislature continues to value public employees and the Unions that represent them as a whole.

Letter from the President

One of the most important recently passed rights was the ability to have

30 minutes at new employee orientations to provide information about the Union. Our strength in the coming years and our ability to gain in terms of wages and benefits is largely based on our ability to show the value of the Union to new employees. That value and return will continue at the bargaining table if your Local Union is a strong and viable force. We've done it for many years, all the way since Council 2 was created in 1946 and certainly since our local government collective bargaining law was passed in 1966.

Most, if not all, of our larger jurisdictions have worked with the employer and have systems in place that provide for Union presentations to take place. In some it's a very informal sit down, while in others, it's a more formal presentation. Council 2 provides new member packets that provide a lot of information about the International Union, Council 2 and your Local Union. They include signups for \$10,000 life insurance, and information about dependent scholarships and the representational services the Union provides.

Our Staff Representatives, while offering expertise and information at the orientation, really rely on the Local Union officers and active members to do the actual talking—you make the difference.

Your Local Union's presentation naturally needs to include the story of the jurisdiction. How long has it been around? What are the processes used to gain everyone's input in that next set of contract negotiations? What should they expect?

If a member has an individual issue, we want to make sure they can pursue it through the Shop Stewards and officers of the Local Union. Most importantly, they should know how they can become active and help make all of this a success.

At the Council 2 level, as many of you know, new members are called through our phone bank once we receive their contact information to follow up and make sure they receive the new member information. Our website Council2.com also has information and a host of other resources for all our members.

The biggest challenge is making sure that everyone knows what the Union has done in the past and what we can continue to do in the future.

One of the best examples of our past success is dependent medical insurance. In the 80's and 90's, it was not a given that an employer provided medical coverage for their spouse or children. With few exceptions, this benefit was gained in countless bargaining tables across the state, making it almost universal across our Local Union jurisdictions. That exemplifies real progress that not only provided families with some peace of mind, but in most instances saved them hundreds of dollars per month.

So, let's all make an effort to take advantage of our rights under the new employee orientation, reach out to the new folks, and tell our story for why being a part of Council 2 continues to make sense.

Happy Holidays and have a great New Year!

Road Crew Workers Win Arbitration Battle with Spokane County

Council 2 road crew workers in Spokane recently won an arbitration victory, ending a long-running contract dispute.

The disagreement stems from whether the County made sufficient outreach to workers during a snowstorm that required overtime help. Spokane is split into several road crew districts, but the dispute only involved one, as supervisors in the other three districts have followed the contract closely and correctly.

Under the terms of the contract negotiated by Council 2, in the event of an unexpected storm, Spokane County must reach out to all public road crew workers before contacting private contractors to plow the roads. After private contractors were hired to clear snow from an unexpected storm, the public road crew workers filed a grievance.

While the County claimed that it reached out to workers before hiring a private firm to clear snow from the streets, a number of Council 2 members reported not receiving any outreach about the opportunity to earn overtime pay and serve their community.

Now, an arbitrator has ruled that the County did not meet its obligation and failed to give employees

adequate notification. As a result of the verified contract violation, three members of the road crew team won financial awards, and workers and Council 2 representatives are confident the same mistakes won't be made again.

"In the future, thanks to this arbitration victory, we probably won't have to grieve it again," said Gordon Smith, Council 2 Representative. Smith believes that the county will pay close attention to meeting their contractually mandated obligations because of the victory.

From the initial contract negotiation, to filing a grievance, to ensuring workers had strong representation during arbitration, Council 2 was with the road crew workers through the entire process.

Workers say they didn't file the grievance just because of overtime pay, but because they take pride in serving their community and doing their part to keep the roads safe. The road crew has an all hands on deck mentality, especially during storms, and there's no doubt they'll continue to bring enthusiasm and perseverance to Spokane County's roads this winter.

Council 2 Members Take Advantage of Bonus AFSCME Benefits

Host of resources available for those who seek them; Spokane County Corrections Officers sets the example

In addition to benefits won in contract negotiation, and resources like life insurance and scholarships, Council 2 members have access to countless opportunities and savings through AFSCME.

Local 492 offers a good example: Spokane County Corrections Officers recently added supplementary legal representation through AFSCME's agreement with PORAC (Peace Officers Research Association of California). In a landslide vote, members approved adding a small increase to their dues to augment the legal services they receive from Council 2 and Spokane County.

The program connects public safety workers with PORAC representatives when they need legal assistance – something not uncommon in a

field rife with potential liability. PORAC provides 24-hour service, meaning Local 492 members can call a phoneline at any time and be connected with an attorney soon after, making it an extremely worthwhile investment in the event of extenuating circumstances and civil or criminal lawsuits.

And while PORAC is available for public safety workers, there are plenty of other options for Locals and workers of all kinds. All you have to do is seek them out.

From affordable insurance products and healthcare savings to discounted entertainment options and legal help, AFSCME offers numerous programs and resources that go above and beyond for members – that's why it's called the AFSCME Advantage.

Information is available in new member packets, at Council 2 offices, and online at AFSCME.org/members/advantage.

Collaborative Based Bargaining Leads to New Benefits, Higher Wages for Timberland Library Employees

Timberland Regional Library employees and Council 2 staff are pointing to a new bargaining approach to explain their best contract yet.

This month, Local 3758 and 3758-S voted to approve the contract that contains major gains for 236 workers at Timberland Regional Library's branches across five counties. The new contract ensures more than a million dollar increase in wages and benefits, expands safe working conditions, and includes cost of living adjustments tied to inflation—a first for Timberland Library employees.

The Library system will pay for 100% of the employees' premium for Washington's new Paid Family and Medical Leave Program, list all new job postings internally before they go public, and offer unlimited emergency leave and bi-lingual pay. The contract honors contemporary workplace policies and

includes five days of bereavement leave for the modern family.

The strong contract resulted from adoption of "collaborative based bargaining" between management and Locals 3758 and 3758-S. The system eschews the typical negotiating process, instead bringing both sides together from the beginning, rather than going back and forth exchanging contracts before mediation.

While Timberland Regional Library employees have had long-drawn-out negotiation in the past, all sides say this contract negotiation was the easiest, fastest, and most successful they've ever had—a great accomplishment that lines up with the ten year anniversary of these Locals organizing with Council 2.

Lhisa Reish, president, said she was especially happy with the contract results. This is her last term as president, and she is slated to retire next year,

"Special thanks to the negotiating team who got us such a great contract, I almost want to work another three years, but not quite."

This kind of negotiation was made possible because of the existing strong relationship the employees had with management. Employees chose to embrace this unity-driven approach instead of focusing on past issues and disagreements that might have complicated the working relationship.

Contract negotiations can often drive division between management and workers, but Timberland Regional Library employees and Council 2 representatives say this process has only increased trust and is an example of bargaining that has improved overall labor relations.

It all goes to show that through working together, collaborating, and setting shared goals and desired outcomes, workers and management can create better agreements and better workplaces together.

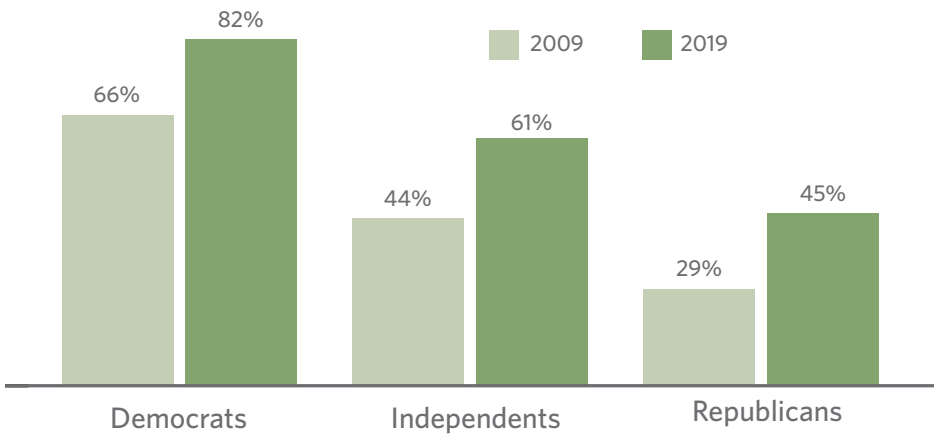
Timberland Regional Library employees have set a great example, and while not every Local will have the opportunity to adopt collaborative based bargaining, it still represents another tool in the toolbox Council 2 representatives can consider to bring our members the contracts and compensation they deserve.



From left: Holly Paxson, 3758-Supervisors President; Lhisa Reish, 3758 Base Unit President.

Union Approval Rate Improves Across All Political Parties

% approving of labor unions by party (Source: Gallup Poll)



Unions Thrive in Face of Attacks from Anti-Worker Organizations

By Bill Keenan, Director of Organizing

Despite the anti-union campaign efforts put forth this year by the "Freedom Foundation" whose goal is to eliminate all unions, Washington has had a bumper year for organizing. 65,000 new members joined in the last year with a stunning increase in union membership of 32.34% in the last five years. The total number of union members statewide has increased to 650,000, making it the third highest nationwide in percentage of union membership. Having a strong unionized Washington has enabled many important legislative gains such as the new State Sick Leave Law, Paid Family and Medical Leave Law, the recent law significantly increasing the eligibility for overtime, and a new law allowing for "card check" recognition for new units if 50% plus one of the employees in the proposed bargaining unit sign authorization cards.

Council 2 specifically has had successful organizing campaigns across the State winning several elections which include; Skagit Transit Dispatchers, City of Olympia Park Rangers, Spokane Regional Emergency Communications Dispatchers and Call Takers, Thurston County Engineers and Planners, City of Moses Lake, City of Sammamish and the City of Issaquah. First time contracts were also successfully negotiated for other units who recently joined the Council 2 ranks which include, Lake Stevens Sewer District and the City of Edmonds.

Currently there are several ongoing organizing campaigns under way around the state which we hope to successfully conclude. If you have any groups in your local government jurisdiction that remain non-union please notify they Council 2 office if you believe they might be a good organizing target.

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"May you live in interesting times."



A Note from General Counsel Ed Stemler

Unions are certainly living through some interesting times currently. Get involved!

The privately funded Freedom Foundation continues to pursue litigation to weaken unions. One current tactic is to use broad public disclosure requests to collect the private personal information of public employees. Despite strong legislative language about protection against identity theft, on October

24, 2019 the Washington State Supreme Court sided with the Freedom Foundation instead of public employees. In a split 5-4 decision, the court ruled that public employees do not have any protected privacy interest against disclosure of their birth dates. In that case the union sought to prevent the disclosure to the Freedom Foundation of employee dates of birth in combination with names and work emails because dates of birth are private.

The 4 dissenting Supreme Court Justices recognize that dates of birth are the key to unlocking substantial intimate details of people's lives. "The ease with which criminal actors can use these keys to unlock our personal details is shocking; the ruination it can cause is even worse." The release of dates of birth can destroy the financial and social lives of unsuspecting employees. The dissent recognized

that fortunately, Washington's Constitution provides broad privacy protection in Article 1, Section 7. The full court could have found this request was prohibited by Washington's Constitution. However, a slim majority of the court disagreed and ruled the other way.

Writing for the majority in favor of the Freedom Foundation, our new chief justice, Debra Stevens, explained that even if public employees find the disclosure of their date of birth highly offensive, that is not sufficient to prevent release to whoever makes a public disclosure request. She even recognizes that, "birth dates are widely used identifiers and there is a proliferation of misuse for criminal purposes..." Despite this, the majority concludes the employee's privacy interest does not prevent disclosure of their date of birth to anyone making a public disclosure request.

The Freedom Foundation is prolific in litigating demands for private information about public employees. Through public disclosure requests, the Freedom Foundation has requested vast amounts of information about public employees beyond dates of birth and work email addresses for union members. Using information they obtain through public disclosure, the Freedom Foundation has sent email attacks on union membership to public employees at their work email addresses. Our public disclosure laws have to be reasonably balanced to protect the privacy of public employees. The Legislature needs to fix this, and you can help by getting involved and letting your elected officials know that your privacy needs protection.

Spokane Sanitation Workers Act Quickly to Save Life

By Joe Cavanaugh, President, Local 270

It was an average afternoon on October 9, 2019 for three employees of the City of Spokane Solid Waste Department. Just by coincidence, drivers Craig Gilbert, Dan Herbers and Mike Morgan were within a few blocks of each other completing their pickups for the day.

Things were quiet when suddenly a car attempted to pass Craig's garbage truck. The driver of the car was not paying close attention and apparently didn't notice the lone motorcycle heading towards them. A horrific collision followed, leaving the motorcycle driver lying on the pavement with critical injuries. Parker Milford lost his lower right leg in the accident and his left leg was shattered by the force of the bike landing on top of him. Milford stated that "I was holding my leg, and I am just bleeding out."

The three drivers recognized the urgency of the situation instantly and worked immediately to save Milford's life.

They blocked the accident scene with their trucks, called first responders and began critical life-saving measures by putting tourniquets on both legs to stop the bleeding. First responders quickly arrived and helped stabilize Milford, transporting him to the hospital where he went into eight hours of surgery, saving his life and his left leg.

Jessica Messenger, Milford's girlfriend, commented that "had the tourniquets not been applied so quickly, he would have died right there on the pavement." She went on to say that the three garbage men might wish to downplay their actions, but they saved her boyfriend's life.

Mr. Milford added, "Nobody else was running to help."

On October 25th Spokane Mayor David Condon honored the three employees for their dedication and quick thinking that saved a man from almost certain death. Council 2 honors our co-workers for their fast action, brave effort, and a true commitment to our community, on and off the job.



From left: Craig Gilbert, Daniel Herbers, and Mike Morgan.



Keep your eyes peeled for Council 2 scholarship opportunities.

More information will be available in January and the submission deadline is March 15.



Stay Connected

Have a story to share or want to learn more about what members of Council 2 are up to?

Visit our website to stay informed on the most current trainings, events, political action, and what members are up to in their communities.

www.Council2.com