



County and City Employee

WASHINGTON STATE COUNCIL OF COUNTY AND CITY EMPLOYEES — AFSCME AFL-CIO



Anita Parks, left, and her daughter Jen Almer work together at the Whatcom County dispatch center.

All in the family

For Jen Almer, working at Prospect, Whatcom County's fire and ambulance dispatch center, is not only providing a vital service to her community it's also a family affair.

The reason: Her mother, Anita Parks, works alongside

her, often on the same shifts.

"We get on real well and I enjoy working with my mom," Almer, 40, says. "We live at opposite ends of the county so we don't have much opportunity to visit each other in our homes, but you really don't need to do much of that when you work

This is the second in a series of articles highlighting Council 2 members and the services they perform.

together all day."

Both are members of Local 114-F. Parks began work at the dispatch center some 23 years ago. Almer worked alongside

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More managers join unions

Tough times are driving more government managers and higher-paid workers to join labor unions.

A recent report in *The Wall Street Journal* on the trend referred specifically to Seattle, where 140 managers, supervisors and strategic advisers at Seattle City Light joined Council 2 when they heard their jobs had been targeted for cuts by Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn.

They formed bargaining units in the past year, becoming part of a growing number of higher-level management groups represented

'Wisconsin's fight is our fight'
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by Council 2. Contract negotiations are under way.

In Minnesota managers at a regional library system have created the first union of its kind.

In Sacramento County, a group including management engineers and lawyers became a collective bargaining unit for the first time, notes *The Wall Street Journal*.

In Washington state unions filed 43 petitions to represent supervisory workers between 2008 and 2010, up from 23 over the previous three years.

'Golden' convention slated for Seattle in June

Yes, it's a big one. A golden anniversary, you could say. Council 2's biennial convention — to be held at the Westin Hotel, Seattle, from June 3 through 5, 2011 — will be its 50th.

At the convention, members express their views on the direction the union should take over the following two years. They do

so through resolutions and constitutional amendments as well as the election of office bearers.

The convention also includes a series of workshops on relevant topics.

A golf tournament, a feature of the convention, will be held Thursday, June 2, at the

Harbour Pointe Golf Course. Check online (www.council2.com) for registration forms.

The Mary Hersey Award for outstanding achievement in labor will be presented at the women's committee breakfast.

For more information, check with your local president or staff representative.

Wisconsin's fight is our fight

CHRIS DUGOVICH

Well it's happened in a big way in Wisconsin and could happen in other states.

It already played a number of years ago in Indiana. A right-wing nut governor gets elected on beating up public employees and immediately takes it out on the friends and neighbors in your community that are just like us, public employees.

In Indiana it was Mitch Daniels. Remember him, he used to be George W's former budget director who went home, got elected and immediately wiped out the executive order put into effect by former Governor Evan Bayh that allowed for collective bargaining.

Indiana was easier to deal with because it was not a piece of legislation passed by the state legislature. Daniels could, and did, wipe it out with the stroke of a pen!

Then comes Wisconsin, where this Governor Scott Walker, with a Tea Party majority in both houses, uses the worst recession since the Thirties to gain significant wage and benefit concessions and remove the public employees' right to collectively bargain and essentially remove the unions' ability to function and exist.

The unions offered to agree to the wage and benefit concessions but rightfully would not give up their bargaining rights or their unions' right to exist.

The governor said the cost savings were not enough. Isn't the loss of tax revenue due to the recession the cause of the problem and haven't the unions offered to solve it? Yes, so Mr. Governor you must just enjoy treating people like crap and being an anti-union nut!

In Washington state and in Wisconsin and across the country public employees have stood up and recognized the difficult times and taken cuts in salaries, cuts in benefits, layoffs, furloughs and a host of other cost-cutting measures to save jobs and services.

All of our membership has been part of this process that hopefully will come to an end soon. But when it comes to our ability to bargain or our union to exist you have over-stepped your bounds and we will fight! In the end we will prevail and we will remember the right-wing anti-union nuts who gain political office and we will see them ride into the sunset! On Wisconsin!



Letter from the President

2011 scholarships honor 24

The scholarships to be awarded this year have been named for 24 people.

\$5,000 yearly four-year award: In memory of Dave Kanigel, Council 2 attorney, deceased.

Six \$5,000 awards: In memory of Darin Crockett, deceased; Marly Henry, deceased; Kevin Lukes, deceased; Richard Farwell, deceased; Norm Mahan, deceased; Donald "Danny" Lemberg, deceased; Tom Foster, deceased; Allen Daaes, deceased; Rozelle Hall, Local 120 Pierce County Health, deceased; Craig Vaughan, deceased; Larry Dixon, deceased.

Six \$2,000 awards: In honor of Robert "Bob" Eskew, retired; Sharon Chisum, retired; Herman Bain, retired; Shirley McWayne, retired; Ada Gillisse, retired; Geneva Obenchain, retired; Rich Needham, retired; Sharon Williamson, retired; Susan Cole, retired; Chris Wood, retired; Curt Patterson, Local 120 Pierce County, retired.

Three \$1,000 Continuing Education awards: In memory of Larry Craig, Local 618 Thurston County, deceased.

Boeing tour was weekend highlight

A tour of the Boeing plant was a highlight of the Executive Weekend held in January.

The weekend — which this year replaced the regular Legislative Weekend held in Olympia — was attended by 140 Council 2 members and included a series of workshops. The event will return to Olympia next year.

FAMILY, from Page 1

her for four years before leaving to raise her sons, who are now in the fourth and ninth grades. She rejoined the center about two years ago.

"People ask if there is ever a fight between us because we sit so close all day," Almer says. "The answer is no. We don't have much family drama.

"Other people think it is a weird situation. But it is so normal to me. I grew up working with my family in emergency services and there is nothing weird about it at all."

Confusion arises because she and her mother sound a lot alike on the telephone and the radio, Almer adds. As a result, people often think they are talking to her mother when they talk to her. And the other way around.

When they handle calls, daughter and mother put family aside and look at one another as co-workers, Almer says.

"There is something very special about working with your daughter," says Parks. "We can kind of read each others' voices and tell what's going on. It is very pleasant."

Parks was eligible to retire at 53, but now, at 58, still continues to work at Prospect. "It is hard to think about retiring at all," she says. "As long as I enjoy my job — and we have the best boss in the world, by the way — it makes it easy to come to work."

The women also derive satisfaction from knowing they are performing an essential community service that can save lives.

"It is neat to see two people working together like this," says Staff Representative Vinnie O'Connor. "It is not something you see in your normal day-to-day operations. They are 911 dispatchers who deal with critical issues and perform a job that can be really stressful.

"They keep people calm and gather information to pass on to the first responders."

Mother and daughter both are involved in union activities and say they appreciate the helpful advice and assistance provided by O'Connor.

Parks served for some time as president of Local 114-F as well as chief steward.

"I believe in unions," she says. She has attended presidents' conferences, women's conferences and the legislative weekend in Olympia.

"I think I have done a little of everything," she adds.

The family relationship does not stop with mother and daughter. When she is on the early-morning shift, Almer's father often walks across from the neighboring fire department and brings her a cup of coffee to help her start the day.

After all, he's family, too.

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Setting aside extra savings pays off for Council 2 member

Jodi Prather, a former Council 2 Executive Board and Women's Action Committee member, was able to retire earlier than she might otherwise have done because she acted on advice given at a Council 2 workshop 15 years ago.



Jodi Prather

The advice came from Council 2 Deputy Director Pat Thompson, who suggested that members set aside additional money for their retirement than that being deducted for pensions.

"The State Legislature had decided in their wisdom to reduce the amount being put toward pensions, and that reduced the amount of the employee's por-

tion, too," Prather explains.

As Thompson had suggested, instead of pocketing the extra money that showed up on her pay check, Prather put it into a deferred compensation account.

"Also, he advised us that when we received a pay increase and our expenses had not risen too much, we should try to funnel that into the deferred compensation account, too," Prather says.

The result: She was able to retire in mid-2010, earlier than she would otherwise likely have done.

Prather says she is not relying on the money in the deferred compensation account to live on, but knows she has money on which she can draw if necessary.

The money is an important back-up should she face an emergency and without it she likely would not have retired when she did.

"With rates on the rise, it may be more difficult, but I would

definitely suggest that other members try to do the same," Prather adds.

She put the additional money

'Acting on advice at a workshop helped me retire earlier'

in a target fund, geared toward changing the balance of investments from less to more secure as the saver approaches and reaches retirement age.

"I invested in a 2010 target fund that will continue to be more conservative over time," she adds.

Before retiring last year, Prather was a member of Local 1135-ST where she conducted environmental monitoring for the Stevens County Public Works Department. She now belongs to the retiree chapter.

EARLY RETIREMENT FACTORS	
RETIREMENT AGE	REDUCTION
55	20%
56	17%
57	14%
58	11%
59	8%
60	5%
61	2%
62	0%
63	0%
64	0%

'Fund pensions, don't cut benefits'

The Legislature is planning to cut back on our pension plans, saying the reason is the budget shortfall.

But the deficits have nothing directly to do with the budget crunch or the recession. They have everything to do with the Legislature's failure to fund the plans in the past. Year after year they simply skipped the payments that were due.

Now those failures are forcing them to make up the shortfall.

Their plans mean not only reneging on deals they have made over the years but also cutting back on the gains we made.

Contact your legislators with this message, "Please focus more on funding the pensions, which you haven't done, and not cutting benefits we've earned."

The governor's request to cut pensions is embodied in HB 1742, which focuses on cutting the Early Retirement Factors.

The proposed cut is for any employees hired after July 1 2011 and so does not affect anyone currently employed.

The present Early Retirement Factors — listed in the table accompanying this article — were put in place as part of a compromise.

Before 2002 anyone who retired before 65 was hit with an 8-percent-ERF a year penalty. That made it virtually impossible to retire early. Opposition to the ERF penalty led to the schedule in the table above, which was adopted for anyone who has 30 years of service.

Council 2 members help defeat Yakima anti-union campaign

Less than three weeks before voting was held on a strong-mayor proposal for the City of Yakima, Council 2 Local 1122 sprang into action. They were opposed to the proposal and wanted to ensure it was defeated.

Behind their determination to defeat the proposal was the fact that it was promoted by an anti-union group. They feared that, using the strong-mayor system, the group could dominate the council and implement their anti-union views.

Joined by another Yakima City union, the local — which represents 250 city employees — rallied behind a group called "Yakima Taxpayers for Accountable Government."

"We didn't have much time to defeat the measure, but we were determined to do so," says Council 2 Staff Representative Yvette Lewis, who served on the committee. "One of the biggest issues was who was backing it."

The strong-mayor campaign was a coalition of conservative business interests led by Bruce Smith, publisher and editor of the Yakima Valley Business Times, who lives in Terrace Heights, outside the Yakima city limits.

The coalition argued that Yakima needed leadership in the form of a popularly elected mayor.

Those opposed to the measure urged voters not to surrender City Hall to special interests.

Former City Council member Paul George said the strong-mayor system had hidden costs, according to a report in the Yakima Herald-Republic. He was afraid it would lead to cronyism and would politicize City Hall.

"We believe in council-manager governance," he told the newspaper. "It's been proven over 50 years."

With the proposal on the ballot for February 8, the Local team got to work in late January.

"We worked on a local telephone bank, calling hundreds of people," Lewis says.

"We prepared fliers, distributed them and mailed them out. We held meetings and some of the people serving on the committee participated in forums.

"It was a last-minute thing, but it was well executed. We hit it particularly hard in the two weeks before the election."

It worked. The measure was defeated by 52 percent to 48 percent.



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Unions are big in local government

More local government employees belong to unions than any other group of workers in the United States.

And those who work for a library or protective service, such as police and fire, are most unionized of all the occupational groups.

Annual figures recently released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that local government has the highest percentage of unionized workers (45 percent), ahead of the 35.6 percent who worked for state government and more than five times the number of Americans who were employed by private businesses (7 percent).

Not only that, but Washington state, at 21.3 percent had the fourth highest percentage of union workers in the nation, after New York (26 percent), Alaska (24.8) and Hawaii (23.5). North Carolina had the lowest rate (3.2).

The figures from the Bureau of Labor statistics also show that:

- Among full-time wage and salary workers, local union members had median weekly earnings of \$743 whereas those private sector workers not represented by unions had median weekly earnings of \$703.

- The overall membership rate for public-sector workers, at 36.2 percent, was substantially higher than that for private sector workers (7 percent).

- The national union membership rate — the percent of wage and salary workers who were members of a union — was 11.9 percent, down from

12.3 percent a year earlier.

- Among occupational groups, education, training and library workers (37.1 percent) and protective services (34.1 percent) had the highest unionization rates.

- More men (12.6 percent) than women (11.1 percent) belong to unions, but the gap between their rates has narrowed considerably since 1983 when the rate for men was about 10 percentage points higher than that for women.

Between 1983 and 2010, the union membership rate for men declined by almost half, whereas the rate for women declined 3.5 percentage points.

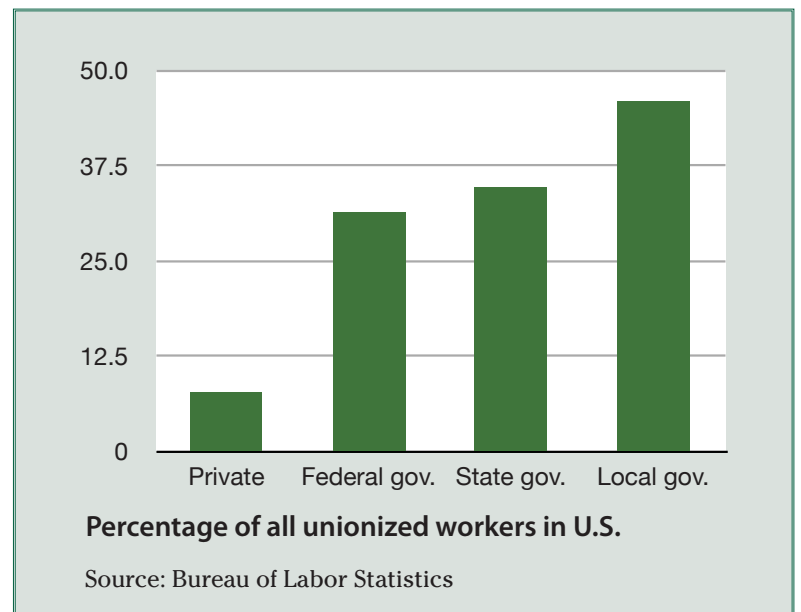
- Black workers (13.4 percent) were more likely to be union workers than workers who were white (11.7 percent), Asian (10.9) and Hispanic (10).

- The union membership rate was highest among 55- to 64-year-old workers (15.7 percent). The lowest union membership rate was among those aged 16 to 24 (4.3 percent).

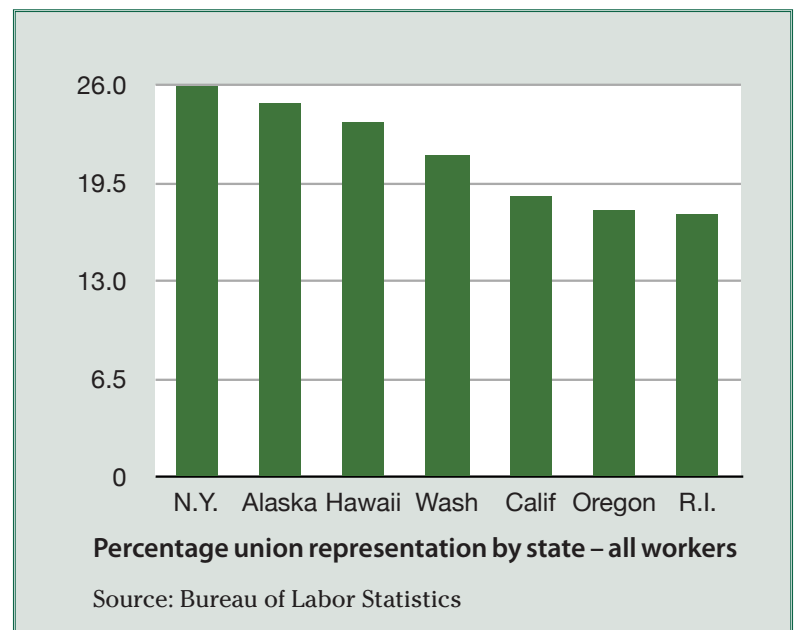
- In 2010, 16.3 million wage and salary workers were represented by a union. This group included both union members (14.7 million) and workers who report no union affiliation but whose jobs are covered by a union contract (1.6 million).

- All states in the Middle Atlantic and Pacific divisions reported union membership rates above the national average. Lowest: East and West South Central states.

Most union employees work for local governments...



and Washington state has the fourth largest union representation in the U.S.



Council 2 staff representatives retire

Don Boxford: 'I believe in unions more than ever'

Don Boxford first became involved in union activities when he worked for Weyerhaeuser in the 70s. His involvement increased in 1979 when he worked for Snohomish County, and joined the Local 109 negotiating team to gain better medical benefits for the road crew.



Don Boxford

Before long he was elected shop steward, vice president and president of Local 109.

"I became involved because I wanted better medical, wages and working condition not only for myself but for the others of the local. The playing field for advancement was not always fair within Snohomish County Road Department and I wanted to try and make it so," he says.

In 1994, eager to serve workers full-time, Boxford signed on with Council 2 as a staff representative in the Wenatchee

office.

He worked there until February 28, when he retired at the age of 66.

"One of the biggest events I recall was when Chris Dugovich took over as executive director of Council 2," Boxford says. "Things changed dramatically for

the better. Since then, Council 2 has grown and become more financially stable.

"Today, I believe in unions more than I ever did. A lot of people have become complacent; they have forgotten why unions were started in the first place. Those same conditions still exist. If we are not vigilant and active, we will slip back to the darker ages of poor wages and working conditions."

Boxford will stay in Wenatchee and plans to do more fishing in his retirement.

Dennis Bolton: 'I think we solved problems well'

For 25 years, Dennis Bolton taught special education classes in North Thurston High School in Lacey. During that time he was a member of the Washington Education Association and later was elected to the union's executive board.



Dennis Bolton

After retiring from teaching, he considered working full-time for a union.

"My sister (Pam Ditloff) was on the executive board of Council 2 and she told me about a staff-representative job that was coming up," Bolton recalls. "I interviewed for the position with Chris Dugovich and realized that I was his wrestling coach when he was in junior high."

Bolton was hired in 1999 as staff representative with Council 2 in Olympia. At one time he was the staff representative for 16 lo-

calls in six counties.

After serving in that position for 11 years, Bolton decided to retire at the end of last year at the age of 65.

"It is a lot of work and could be stressful, but I enjoyed both the job and the people I worked with," Bolton says.

"Looking back, I think what stands out right now is how difficult it has become with the current state of the economy.

"My philosophy always was to develop good relations with membership as well as management and trying to solve problems

"I think we did that well.

"I really appreciated working for Council 2."

Bolton plans to spend the first few years of his retirement traveling to relatives in Alaska, Utah, California and New Mexico.