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NEWS IN BRIEF

Four join Council 2

Four deputy investigators in the Medical Examiners' Office in Spokane have joined Council 2.

They are now part of Local 1553, which represents employees in the Spokane County Courthouse.

The four members, led by Spokane Staff Representative Gordon Smith, will soon start negotiating an addendum to the Local's existing contract.

"The primary issue will be wages," Smith says. "They are 47 percent behind their counterparts in other parts of the state."

Put your Local news on the Internet

Using a service provided by Council 2, you can now post your Local news on the Internet without having your own Web site.

You also can protect your news with a password so that only authorized viewers may read it.

The process is simple and quick; all you have to do is ask.

Once we have set up the page for you, simply tell members to visit the Council 2 Web site — www.council2.com — and to click on Local news on the left of the home page.

They will be taken to the Local news page where, by clicking on their Local number, they will be able to read the latest posting from their Local.

The service can be initiated by a Local president and requires no special computer expertise. We do all the work for you.

For full details, visit the Local news page at www.council2.com.

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Host committee wants to create a...

CONVENTION TO REMEMBER

When delegates arrive in Spokane for the Council 2 biennial convention the host committee hopes they will be pleasantly surprised.

From decorations to the dinner-dance Saturday night to the hospitality rooms, they want to make the convention one the attendees will remember.

"The convention host committee is motivated, excited and enthused," says Gordon Smith, Staff Representative in Council 2's Spokane office. "They want to show off our city and ensure everyone has a great time."

Arranged around a theme that is planned to be a surprise, the decorations and festivities will radiate energy and excitement.

The committee held its first meeting in early March during the Legislative Weekend (see Page 4). Much of the preparatory work therefore already has been done.

All that remain are a couple of committee meetings to tie up the loose ends. Then it is matter of waiting for the convention to start on June 10 when the 15-member committee will swing into action.

As attendees arrive, committee members — all volunteers from Spokane-area

Locals — will make sure delegates have

all the materials they need and know of places to go and things to do in Spokane during their free time.

They have invited local elected officials to be there, too. After all, they want to spread the fun around a little.

**More on the
convention:
Page 3**

Council 2 members will be present at golf course in two capacities

At the golf tournament to be held at the start of Council 2's biennial convention in Spokane, members of Council 2 will not only be playing on the course — they will also be maintaining it.

The course, called The Creek at Qualchan, is run by the City of Spokane and the grounds are maintained by members of Local 270, which represents City workers.

The course is the newest in Spokane, is located in a natural setting and is a sanctuary for many species of birds and wildlife. A creek meanders throughout the course, which includes five ponds, wooded and hilly areas and a few holes with open beauty as well as well protected greens.

Council 2 members who play the course will undoubtedly be admiring the handiwork of their fellow union members as they sink those putts.



Good and bad mark legislative session

Pat Thompson, Council 2's Deputy Director, rates the past Legislative Session a C+ or, when he is feeling a little more generous, perhaps a B-.

"We were satisfied with several of the issues that funded local government programs," Thompson explains. "But we were very disappointed that the bill aimed at restructuring the pension plans under which many Council 2 members fall did not pass."

Here's a look, first, at the good side of the session.

• Even though the Legislature was facing a deficit, it stepped up to the plate on a number of funding issues, including public health, Thompson says.

"They did an adequate job of coming up with dollars for programs that were hardest hit by the initiative tax cuts," he adds.

See **SESSION**, Page 3

Lynnwood members gain new benefits

Almost two years after they voted to join Council 2, 85 technical and professional employees of the City of Lynnwood, Local 3035, have completed writing a contract that covers their pay, benefits and working conditions.

Negotiations started in January last year and took some time because they were complex, says Joe Devlaeminck, Council 2's staff representative who has been assigned specifically to negotiate first-time contracts. The new agreement was ratified by the membership in mid-February.

"Most of the employees are very happy with the results," Devlaeminck adds. "The contract is a good foundation to build on for the future. Some of the City's policies were old and needed to be updated. This does that."

Bill Keenan, Council 2's Director of Organizing, says the contract is significant as, before the ratification, Lynnwood was the last major city in Snohomish and King counties to be without a contract.

Not only does this contract fill the gap, but it provides a comparison for other cities in the region, Keenan says.

See **LYNNWOOD**, Page 3

Performance audits are great, but it's hard to perform without revenue

CHRIS DUGOVICH

The 2005 Legislative session ended as it began: with a triumphant celebration at the passage of performance audits.

House Speaker Frank Chopp—for whom performance audits were a long priority and who ushered them through the House in January—gained high-profile company when Governor Christine Gregoire embraced the concept during her campaign and underscored a commitment to government accountability during her inauguration.

Now Washington's political leadership can celebrate a real victory, and the people of Washington can hopefully be spared a redundant and unnecessary initiative from Tim Eyman.

It seems the State's leading Democrats had such a good idea—extending audits to include not only finances but actual job performance—that Eyman felt the need to jump on the bandwagon. Of course,



Letter from the President

following three consecutive years in which either his statewide initiatives did not qualify or were soundly defeated at the ballot box—despite raising over \$1 million and pocketing a tidy six figure stipend—this one seems like a surefire winner. (Has anyone thought to audit *his* performance?)

Eyman's audit initiative, called I-900, is so unnecessary that even if it gets the needed signatures and passes, there will be no discernible impact.

In fact, the only thing I-900 will do is create an extra layer of bureaucracy—and with it extra cost for cash-strapped local governments around the state. How ironic: a big government initiative from the man who makes a living railing against government.

It's logical and at times beneficial for government entities to conduct performance audits. Many, such as King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties, as well as the City of Seattle, already do.

But while these audits can help streamline performance, they are no panacea for the services lost (and therefore inconveniences gained) through lost revenue. The loss of service is especially noticeable at the local level, and especially in smaller counties harder hit by (Eyman's) Initiatives 695 and 747.

Take libraries for example. Losses of Sunday hours and across the board staff layoffs create two problems likely to show up in a performance audit: longer lines at the checkout counter and greater inconvenience for patrons. Does this mean the library staff and administration aren't performing admirably or efficiently?

Is a rural county road crew that has lost 40 percent of its funding—and therefore isn't plowing the

snow as much or replacing gravel on the roads—failing to perform its mission? Or are they simply out of money, and doing the best they can?

It would be great if we included in performance audits a way to measure optimal performance, or how those services would be provided in a near-perfect world. In some cases, that may mean savings—like ending duplicative maintenance contracts or improving purchasing of equipment and supplies.

But in other circumstances, optimal performance may require additional revenue—to add service hours, hire staff, or purchase updated technology.

In other words, if the public trusted performance audits not only to suggest service cuts, but also service enhancements, we may finally end the damaging cycle of feel-good initiatives playing off public cynicism and resulting in deep cuts that only make people lose more faith in government service.

Across the state, public employees are working in partnership with local officials to educate the public on the critical need to improve local government funding and restore the confidence needed to make it happen.

Performance audits can help restore that confidence—an idea clearly not lost on Chopp, Gregoire and others.

Eyman, on the other hand, would put himself out of a job if he couldn't stir up distrust in government, so perhaps he has other motives. Maybe by piling on and creating additional bureaucracy, he can complain about the swelling ranks of auditors performing redundant tasks and wasting tax dollars.

A problem he will attempt to solve, no doubt, through another initiative.



2005 Scholarship awards

DEPENDENT SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS (\$2,000 EACH)

In Memory of Mike Cmos, Past Member of Spokane, Local 270; Perry Crandall, Past Member of Pierce County Library District, Local 3787; Gail St. John, past Member of Issaquah School Bus Drivers, Local 21-I; and Velma Stanley, Past Member of Seattle City Librarians/Clerical/Custodians/Info Techs, Local 2083:

Recipient	Member	Member is from Local
Lillian Auld	Mary Auld	109-E, Snohomish Co. Engineers
Callie Boyd	Richard Boyd	1191-W, City of Walla Walla
Meagan Sanders	Karen Powers	114, City of Bellingham
Jennifer Weiland	Warren Weiland	21-E, City of Enumclaw

DEPENDENT 4-YEAR SCHOLARSHIP AWARD (\$5,000 A YEAR)

Recipient	Member	Member is from Local
Wayne Barthule	Michelle Barthule	618 Thurston County

CONTINUING EDUCATION AWARDS (\$500 EACH)

In Memory of Walt Bailey, Past Member of Grays Harbor County, Local 275; and Judy Talbot, Former Member of City of Walla Walla, Local 1191-W:

Recipient	Recipient is from Local
Roger Moller	109, Snohomish Co. Road Department
Ann Robinett	109-E, Snohomish Co. Engineers
John Maki	275, Grays Harbor Co./Aberdeen School District
Joanna Fredin	307-VC, City of Vancouver
Kathleen Law	492-J, Spokane County Juvenile
Suzanne Hanby	618, Thurston County
Terrie Roberts	1553, Spokane County Courthouse
Stephanie Zero	1857, King County Library System

What AFSCME means to my family

By CARA SAUNTO

Throughout my life my mother has been an active participant in her union, Local 2083, Council 2. She has held every position including president and is currently the executive vice president. Union issues have always been a topic of discussion for our family at the dinner table. I have vivid memories of long debates over contract negotiations, organizing our county's library system, election of officers and many other topics.

Every year since I can remember, on Labor Day weekend our family would go to a local park to attend the annual Labor picnic. It was always fun for me as a kid to ride the ponies and eat hotdogs but now that I am older, I can appreciate the value of the speakers as well. My most memorable year at the picnic was in 1999 when Vice President Al Gore spoke. After his speech I was able to shake his hand. He was the first politician I shook hands with and it made me so excited I had to go brag to all my friends at school about how cool the Labor Day picnic was.

A few years later, I realized how our country's international policies could have a profound effect on my family as shortly after September 11, 2001 my dad was laid off from Boeing. His job did not have union representation. He has never had the opportunity to participate in a union and as a result has not been able to enjoy the consistent employment that my mom has.

My mother, who has been a member of AFSCME for over thirty years, has been steadily employed at the Seattle Public Library for the entire period. The connection

between union membership and secure employment has been evident many times showing the direct effect the union's importance has had on my family.

Another way that AFSCME has impacted our lives occurred this past June when I was fortunate to accompany my mother at the AFSCME convention in Anaheim, CA. That really drove home the meaning of the organization. Seeing the thousands of delegates with their green shirts, hats and signs—the Green Machines!—made the organization really come alive.

I had never realized just how big and powerful AFSCME really is. As the delegates enthusiastically cheered on the speakers I could see the genuine pride they had in their union. This pride produced the mounting anticipation for everyone in the hall leading up to the introduction of the International President Gerald McEntee and the International Secretary-Treasurer William Lucy. When each made his first rousing speeches I finally understood why the delegates loved McEntee and Lucy so much.

I could feel the power of their speeches, how that made everyone in the hall feel and the motivation it gave the delegates to return to their cities and fight for their members. I was cheering right along with my mom and her union members which made me sure that I want to be in the union too.

The two other speakers that really touched me were former President William Clinton and presidential hopeful John Kerry. The sheer fact that two of the most powerful people in the world wanted to speak before the AFSCME members shows the importance and power the organization holds. Though I still cannot vote, listening to

Kerry and especially Clinton speak made me fully realize how important national politics are and how they affect everyone, including myself.

My mom, as a self-described union activist, is always telling me that the best way to make changes in my community is to be proactive. So, following the convention last summer I distributed John Kerry bumper stickers, pins and yard signs to the students, teachers and staff at my high school. I felt that educating people concerning John Kerry's platform was an important cause that I wanted to support.

Through all the excitement of the national convention and the amazing politicians who made appearances there, I realized that the real work gets done every month at the local union meetings. I have watched my mom fight for increased benefits for her fellow employees, ensure that there is a union representative on nearly every committee in the library and make certain that each employee's concerns would be heard and considered by the management.

The benefits provided by my mom's union have attracted the vast majority of her co-workers, over 400 of them. These are the types of workers who have been continuing AFSCME's commitment to workplace justice for almost seventy years. It is once a month in places like the basements of neighborhood libraries that the small battles are being fought and won. In a very real way AFSCME has provided the employment security and peace of mind my family relies on.

Cara Saunto is the recipient of an AFSCME Family Scholarship. This essay is reprinted with her permission.



47TH BIENNIAL CONVENTION

**WEST COAST RIDPATH HOTEL,
SPOKANE
JUNE 10-12, 2005**

Note: Programs are subject to change



WORKSHOPS

Friday:

- **Chris Dugovich**, Council 2 President/Executive Director, will conduct a "New delegate orientation" in the afternoon. First-time delegates are highly encouraged to attend.

Saturday:

- **Bev Propps-Kreisberg**, AFSCME Advantage Member Benefit Coordinator will conduct an "AFSCME Advantage" workshop
- **Larry Scanlon**, AFSCME Director of Political Action, will conduct a workshop
- **Steve Kreisberg**, AFSCME Associate Director Department of Research and Collective Bargaining will conduct a "Health Benefits Bargaining" workshop
- **Council 2 Women's Committee** will conduct a workshop on "Dealing with people you can't stand."

AGENDA

Friday, June 10

Morning Golf Tournament (*see report Page 1*)
 Afternoon Registration
 Workshops
 Evening Welcome Reception

Saturday, June 11

Morning PEOPLE Breakfast
 Speaker to be announced
 (*Tickets available through staff representatives or at registration*)
 Registration continues
 Convention convenes

Afternoon Workshops
 Evening Dinner/Dance

Sunday, June 12

Morning Women's Action Committee Breakfast;
 Speaker: Flora Walker
 Northwest Regional Director
 (*Tickets available at Women's Action booth during registration*)
 Convention reconvenes
 Executive Board meeting

Pension fund rates to rise

The amount withdrawn from paychecks for PERS II and SERS II pension plans will increase in coming months.

On July 1, 2005, the rates for PERS II will increase from 1.18 percent to 2.25 percent. In July 2006 the rate will increase to 3.5 percent.

From September 1, 2005 the rates on SERS II will go from 1.18 percent

to 2.75 percent.

"They were scheduled to rise even more," says Council 2 Deputy Director Pat Thompson. "These bills are coming due and we are going to see increases in our rates — and we should see them or else the plans will be under-funded."

"The more the rates stay down now, the more they will rise later."

SESSION from Page 1

- Transportation funding, too, was good news.

The cities and the counties each receive \$16 million annually from the gas tax increase for much-needed local government transportation funding.

In terms of human services, the mental health parity measure helped. Insurance companies are now required to treat mental health programs just as they do regular health issues.

"That helps employees in human services and even the correctional officers because so many of the issues they support are mental health issues."

- A law on signature gatherers that Council 2 has been seeking for the last two years finally was passed. The measure, signed into law by Gov. Gregoire on May 3, requires signature gatherers to sign their petitions, making it easier for the Secretary of State and law enforcement officials to investigate signature fraud and other irregularities.

The Voter Education Committee, a Council 2 project, worked with a bipartisan legislative coalition, law enforcement and other groups to pass the legislation.

"Passage of this bill brings us one step closer to restoring some public faith in the initiative process," says Chris Dugovich, Council 2 President/Executive Director. "Paid signature gatherers are no longer operating anonymously and in the shadows."

That is where the good news ends, Thompson says.

Now for a look at the bad side of the session.

- The Legislature failed to approve HB 1325 which would have implemented proposals from the Select Committee on Pension Policy.

"The state ended up under-funding pensions by \$324 million to make up their budget shortfall," Thompson says. "At least that's not as severe as the \$524 million they were originally talking about."

The Legislature hopes to put the money back into the pension fund in future years.

"But the problem is that the more they under-fund it, the more the bill for future repayments goes up," Thompson says.

He pointed out that the benefits being paid to those who receive local government pensions will not be affected by the Legislature's action. "It only makes it harder for the future,"

Thompson says he is worried that the Legislature, like President Bush, will force local employees into a private fund rather than the state-run pension fund. "They might criticize Bush, but they are doing the same sort of thing for the pension plans they control."

The good side of this bad news is that the Legislature might pass the bill next year, Thompson says. "We have been given strong indications they will try to take care of that next session," he says. "I am cautiously optimistic we will be able to make headway then when not so many issues will be competing for attention and it might be a friendlier environment in which they can be more focused."

"They recognize their funding of the system is not a reasonable way. They formally want the Select Committee to come up with alternatives. That's a job for the next session."

LYNNWOOD, from Page 1

Among the provisions in the new contract:

- A new, well defined procedure for layoffs.
- Martin Luther King Day becomes a holiday and all employees gain one or two additional days of vacation, depending on their length of service with the City.
- Part-time employees who work at least 1,040 hours a year now attain seniority and gain prorated medical benefits, based on the number of hours they work during the year.
- Employees receive almost double the amount of additional income for long service than they did previously.
- Employees now have a grievance procedure, which they did not have before.

- Nearly all aspects of employment are better defined than they were.

Devlaeminck says Local 3035 president Linda Alvar played an important part in the leadership of the negotiations.

"She and the other members of the negotiating team were there faithfully every day," Devlaeminck said.

"They worked hard and long hours to make sure it was a good contract and that it achieved the results that they expected when they set out to bargain the agreement."

"It is not easy bargaining for the first time, but they soon picked up on the strategy and the process."

"Toward the end they held tough all the way."

COUNCIL 2 EXECUTIVE BOARD		
OFFICERS Chris Dugovich, President/Executive Director Ron Fredin, Vice-President Judy Johnson, Secretary/Treasurer		
DISTRICT ONE Roger Moller, Local 109 (Snohomish County) Lee Lehman, Local 1849 (San Juan County) Jay Crockett, Local 1811-CA (Snohomish County) Darrell Stuart, Local 113 (City of Everett)	DISTRICT TWO Doug Peterson, Local 21 (City of Seattle) Kathleen Senecaut, Local 2617 (City of Kent) Michael West, Local 2084-SC (King County Superior Court)	DISTRICT THREE Patti Cox, Local 3787 (Pierce County Library District) Conni Uhinck, Local 1308 (Kitsap County) John Ohlson, Local 120 (City of Tacoma)
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President/Executive Director.....Chris Dugovich
 AddressP.O. Box 750, Everett, WA 98206-0750



The annual Legislative Weekend, held in Olympia in March, continues to be one of the most popular events on the Council 2 calendar.

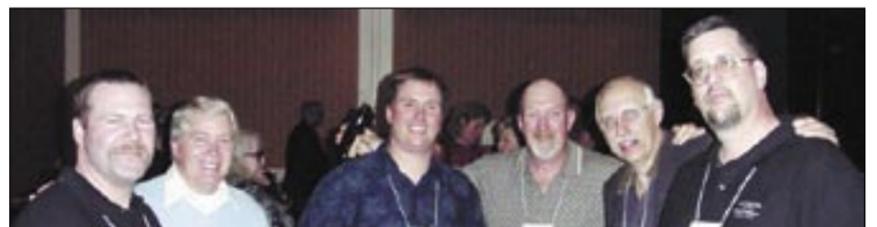
"A number of people enjoy meeting their legislative representatives and they enjoy meeting our members," says Council 2 Deputy Director Pat Thompson.

Right: Sen. Karen Keiser (D-District 33) with Council 2 member Michael West, Local 2084-SC King County.

Left: Sen. Jim Honeyford (R-District 15) with members Juan Rodriguez and Erik Vatshell, both of Local 1122, City of Yakima.



Workshop by Don Craig, ASFCME Northwest Region Education Coordinator.



Attendees at Thursday night legislative reception.

Local president named employee of the year

It was standing room only at the Kent Mayor's monthly breakfast meeting in February. The reason: The City of Kent Employee of the Year was to be announced.

When the announcement was made that Local 2617 president Kathleen Senecaut had been selected for the honor, every employee stood and the applause was long and loud. She clearly was a popular choice.

Senecaut, a senior budget analyst who also serves on Council 2's executive board, was chosen from among 772 people who were qualified for the honor.

"I felt overwhelmed to be standing in front of my peers and to receive the award," she says. "I know most of the other candidates. I feel they are all qualified. What an honor to have been chosen."

Among the reasons she was chosen—Cliff Craig, the City's assistant finance director, said at an official award

presentation April 19—is that Senecaut demonstrates the City's six corporate values.

She is a person of integrity who will do the right thing even if it hurts; she cares about people, the departments and the City; she communicates, keeping

Chosen from among 772

everyone in touch; she is a team player, working with all departments, helping them to get their budgets together; she innovates; and she achieves.

The City is particularly impressed with the way in which Senecaut conducts negotiations between labor and management. "She has been seen as a voice of reason," Craig said. "And that is an important role."

Such a role is challenging. Negotiations are often adversarial and union members who lead them can be con-

sidered unlikely to receive "employee of the year" awards from management. Yet Senecaut, with her dedication to honesty and fairness, has shown that it is indeed possible to do so.

So much so that management has requested that she continue as president because they work so well together.

Employees in other departments with whom she works on budget preparation say she is courteous and kind.

Senecaut's dedication to reaching out to others does not stop at work. She also conducts volunteer work for the City of Seattle's Victims Support Team. Set up to assist victims of domestic violence, members of the team provide resources for victims, including setting up safe houses, talking to the children about a safety plan, arranging transportation, providing basic needs like food and clothing as well as emotional support.

"No one deserves to be abused," she says. "I'm grateful I can be part of such a valuable program."



Kathleen Senecaut