



# COUNTY & CITY

# EMPLOYEE

AFSCME AFL-CIO

Vol. 24 No. 3

<http://www.council2.com>

Fall 2009

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### AFSCME announces scholarships

The AFSCME scholarship program for 2010 for children of AFSCME members has been announced. Under the program, 10 scholarships of \$2,000 will be awarded to each winner selected from the applications that meet the eligibility requirements.

The scholarships will be renewed for \$2,000 a year for a maximum of four years, provided the student remains enrolled in a full-time degree program at an accredited institution.

Application forms can be downloaded at <http://www.afscme.org/members/880.cfm> or by writing to: AFSCME Family Scholarship Program, c/o AFSCME Advantage, 1625 L Street NW, Washington, DC 20036.

### Oregon workers also agree to take furloughs

Oregon state workers, like their Washington state counterparts, are agreeing to furloughs as a way to save jobs during tough economic times.

A tentative contract agreement announced recently between the state and AFSCME Council 75 and Service Employees International Union Local 503 calls for 10 to 14 furlough days during the next two years, depending on workers' rates of pay. The state had wanted workers to take up to 24 days of unpaid leave, but a compromise was reached.

The new contract, which calls for no cost-of-living pay increases during the 2009-2011 biennium, runs through June 30, 2011.

## INSIDE

### New members sign up across the state

— Page 3

### Library staff praised for civic spirit

— Page 4

## Workers seek union security

The impact of the bad economy on local governments is causing workers across the state to seek the security of union protection.

Employees of cities and counties who are unaffiliated with unions are calling Council 2 in increasing numbers to find out how they can gain the protection that comes with being part of a large powerful organization that can fight for their rights.

Of course, most of the state's city and

county employees already are members of Council 2; the new members are from the ranks of those who have not been members but are now eager to join up.

Already this year about 500 workers have joined Council 2 as a result. Several cases are still pending, the results of which are likely to be seen later this year.

In all cases the support for union membership has been so strong that more than 70 percent have voted to join the union or have signed cards indicating their desire

to join the union; this "card check" makes an election unnecessary.

"Almost all say that the current economic conditions are leading them to contact us," says Council 2 Director of Organizing Bill Keenan. "They are concerned about the effect of lower budgets and resulting cutbacks and they want to speak with a united voice."

• **New members sign up in cities and counties across the state (See reports on Page 1 and Page 3).**

**BARGAINING**

**TO SAVE JOBS**

A common aim lies behind the bargaining agreements reached between management and Council 2 unions this year: Saving jobs.

"We are doing all we can to prevent our members being put out on the street where there are few job openings," says Council 2 Director of Research Bill Dennis, who has been involved in negotiating many of the agreements.

Most members have had to accept furlough days, or unpaid leave, for a number of days each year, reducing their pay checks. Others have forfeited cost-of-living adjustments. A number have contributed more to their health benefits.

"But the alternative would have been to go through the layoff process," Dennis says. "A common goal is to try to keep our brothers and sisters employed during this difficult time."

Workers at the Seattle Public Library, facing a severe budget crunch, settled on taking a full week off this year, during which time the library was closed. (See full coverage, Page 4.) Others took certain days during the year, sometimes following a long weekend, during which the offices for which they worked closed down.

"With negotiating to save jobs as the bottom line, our staff is doing what they can do to save jobs with measures, such as furloughs, that have a short-term impact," Dennis explains. "Wage reductions would have a long-term impact as they would tend to reduce wages into the future."

"Each method has its pros and cons. But we are savings jobs."

- **Surviving the squeeze: Summaries of agreements, Page 2**
- **Seattle Public Library closes for a week, Page 4.**

## Initiative 'would make recession permanent'

An initiative that will appear on the November ballot would slow the economic recovery and leave Washington state in a permanent recession.

That's the warning being issued by both labor and business organizations about initiative 1033 being sponsored by Tim Eyman.

The measure would limit the growth in certain state, county and city revenues to annual inflation and population growth, excluding voter-approved revenue increases.

"The biggest harm from this initiative is that it will prevent the economic recovery from taking place in our state," says Council 2 Deputy Director Pat Thompson. "Members of Council 2 would be unable to benefit from rising revenues and the cutbacks would become the norm. This year our cities and counties have faced large budget deficits that have resulted in cuts that have included furloughs and layoffs for our members."

"If passed, I-1033 would lock in this year's budget as our baseline. It could be increased only by the inflation and population growth rates and not by a rebound

VOTE **NO** INITIATIVE 1033

See 1033, Page 2

## Commission confirms validity of card checks

The Public Employees Relations Commission (PERC) has rejected arguments that an election should be held instead of accepting the results of card authorizations signed by employees who wish to join a union.

"Employers frequently allege that employees are not aware of what they are signing and therefore should be allowed to vote in an election," the commission

said. "The executive commission rejects this argument."

The commission made the ruling in resolving a dispute that arose following the filing of a petition to join Council 2 by about 40 Clark County Deputy Prosecuting Attorneys earlier this year.

The employees were concerned about budget shortfalls in Clark County and wanted to have a voice in how their wages

and benefits would be affected. They approached Council 2 staff who arranged for the signing of authorization cards by the deputy attorneys.

When more than 70 percent of the employees signed the cards, Council 2 asked PERC to hold a card check, a process in which the commission checks the

See CARDS, Page 3

# It's never enough

**CHRIS DUGOVICH**



*Letter from the President*

In the King County race for county executive, the candidates have been pared down to two in the August 18 primary. The five-way race that preceded the narrowing of the field took a familiar tone.

In the past year, due to the economic slowdown, our members in King County stepped up and readily recognized the difficult budget the County was facing. Although their decision was not an easy one, they were the first group of any size in the public sector to agree to concessions resulting in a program of 10 days off without pay spread out through the calendar year 2009.

We saved some of our fellow employees jobs, not to mention a better than 4 percent savings to King County.

Without nearly a mention of the sacrifices the employees of King County made in the collective bargaining process, candidate Fred Jarret an east-side Republican turned Democrat loudly proclaimed throughout his failed re-election effort that the employees' health care needed to be cut and he would make it a priority.

Others jumped on the bandwagon, ignoring the previous efforts of the unions and the county employees to be realistic about what had been occurring to county revenues.

As a matter of fact, this union has been a leader in coming to grips with the financial crisis that has now, we hope, hit bottom — not only in King County, but also in Seattle, Snohomish, Kitsap, Thurston, Grays Harbor and many other jurisdictions.

We've recognized the obvious and worked with the various administrations to save jobs and ultimately save services.

All types of proposals were floated during the King County campaign by the candidates, including one that would have you pay more for health care if you made over a certain level of income.

Under Ron Sims, cooperation between the County and the union was part of a long-standing rational bargaining process. Pot shots by either side were avoided in the press and things got done. King County's wellness program, while continuing to be refined, is a national trend setter and it saves dollars.

Now ultimately running for arguably the state's second-most important elected executive position is not the same as actually doing the job. It's been a long time since throwing public employees to the mob was viewed as unproductive. We can take our lumps and will continue to do so.

But if one of your motives is to be an effective manager of a local government — and in this case a large local government — a good idea is not to "kick 'em" in the head before you ever reach the front door.

You might just find we are pretty reasonable to deal with!

# SURVIVING THE SQUEEZE

Here are summaries of some of the adjustments negotiated in Council 2 bargaining agreements this year.

## Snohomish County and all AFSCME units

- In agreement with the union, the county is furloughing staff and shutting down its facilities on six weekdays this year to avoid additional layoffs this year that would otherwise have been necessary.

- If the county's income exceeds 107.5 percent of the March 17, 2009 revenue forecast, the union may renegotiate the cost-of-living adjustment for 2010.

- If the county's income comes in at 97.5 percent or below the March 17, 2009 forecast, the county may renegotiate furloughs or weekly hour reductions in 2010, or both.

- The agreement caps employee medical insurance premiums at the pre-2009 amounts. Negotiations on successor agreements will start no later than August 2010.

## Pierce County and Local 120

- All bargaining unit members are taking nine eight-hour days of unpaid leave (furlough) from May to December in 2009.

## City of Aberdeen and Local 275

- After members of the local union voluntarily agreed to assist in cutting costs, the city implemented eight furlough days from April 10 through November 20, 2009.

## Thurston County and Local 618 CO, DC and T and the Association of Deputy Prosecuting Attorneys

- The county and the bargaining unit agreed to a program of voluntary leave without pay and voluntary contributions to medical benefits to help reduce payroll costs and avoid layoffs. The program runs to the end of 2009.

## Franklin County and Locals 874CH and 2658-F

- The collective bargaining agreement has been amended to

allow for furloughs that amount to one unpaid day a month beginning July 1, 2009 and ending December 31, 2009.

## Spokane County and Local 1553 for those members working in the Building and Planning Departments

- To save layoffs, the parties agreed to schedule work furlough closures starting on May 4, 2009 and ending on February 26, 2010.

## Seattle Public Library and Council 2

- The library administration and the union agreed that the library will be closed from Monday, August 31, 2009 through Sunday, September 6, 2009 and that staff will not be paid for those days. The closure is a result of operating budget restrictions.

- Health care coverage is not affected.

## Grays Harbor County and the Local 275 Courthouse

- To address the budget reduction for 2009 and to mitigate layoffs, the county implemented a voluntary leave without pay (furlough) and voluntary benefits contribution program from May through December 2009.

- The county encouraged voluntary retirement for eligible employees until June 2009 to cut personnel costs and reduce a severe budget shortfall.

## City of Coeur d'Alene and Lake City Employee Association

- The association agrees to forego the October 1, 2009 3 percent increase in wages so long as all other employees, including the Mayor and Council, do not receive a 3

percent cost of living adjustment for fiscal year 2009-2010.

- The City agrees to no layoffs during fiscal year 2009-2010.

## King County and the King County Coalition of Unions (which includes Council 2)

- The county and coalition agreed to 10 furlough days during 2009 on which all but essential services will be cut, a move that will produce significant savings and preserve employees' cost of living adjustments, merit and step pay.

## City of Renton and Local 2170

- All employees agree to take a negotiated furlough day on four days from May 22, 2009 to November 25, 2009.

## City of Kent and Local 2617

- All furlough-eligible employees will cut their hours by 3.08 percent (48 hours a year) from March 16, 2009 through December 15, 2009 in exchange for a non-cash furlough leave bank of 48 hours. Regular part-time employees will have their hours-reduction and furlough-leave credit based on their positions' budgeted percentage of full-time equivalents.

## King County and Local 2084 SC, Superior Court

- All Superior Court employees agreed to four days of mandatory unpaid leave (furloughs) in 2009 as the county and court are experiencing a financial emergency. Employees will work with their supervisors to schedule their furlough days.

- Employees earning less than \$16.92 an hour will not be required to take furlough days.

- Medical, dental, vision and other insured benefits will be unaffected by the mandated leave.

## 1033, from Page 1

in revenues should the economy recover.

"This is not a new idea. It has been tried and doesn't work."

Similar initiatives have been defeated at ballots in four states, including Oregon and California and kept from the ballot in five states. Similar measures were introduced legislatively in 28 states, but Colorado remains the only state to have adopted the idea.

The measure has been suspended in that state, however, largely because business groups recognized how harmful it was to their interests.

Thompson explains that costs such as health care and education do not follow normal inflation, which is the measure used in the

initiative.

"You create these formulas, but real-life spending costs don't fit into your formulas," Thompson says. "They don't fit into the box that is created for them. They run much higher than artificial inflation measures.

"Eyman (the initiative sponsor) is up to his old tricks — trying to profit from failed ideas," Thompson says.

"It is really an abuse of the initiative process.

"The idea that one snake-oil salesman and a wealthy businessman backing him can abuse the initiative process is costing all of us."

Arguments against the measure raised by Permanent Defense and the

Washington State Budget & Policy Center include these points:

- The initiative is designed to lock in all the budget cuts that state and municipal governments are currently making, thus potentially killing thousands of jobs in the years to come.

- This initiative is the exact opposite of real reform. Instead of fixing what's broken, it would make all of our lives worse. Much worse. We need real tax reform that improves stability and fairness in our tax system.

- Property taxes already have strict limitations on growth and levels. The result of these has been particularly hard on local governments, who have limited ability to raise other taxes.

# City staff check out area unions, select Council 2

When a group of City of Lakewood employees decided they would like to investigate joining a union, they formed an exploratory committee of 10 members to set the process in motion.

As a start, the committee compiled a questionnaire, which they sent to prospective unions.

The questionnaire asked for background on the organization, examples of similar groups that the union managed and requested copies of the organization's charter and the amount of dues paid.

They also questioned the organization on how the dues were spent, what assistance it provided in contract bargaining, whether it provided legal representation and was part of a national organization and what experience it had in representing a diverse workforce.

Once the questionnaires were received, the Lakewood employees set up interviews with several of the unions. Toward the end of February, Council 2's Director of Organizing Bill Keenan attended an interview and presented the

union's approach to a meeting of the workers.

The following day, Council 2 was selected as the union that they would like to join.

The organization committee asked their fellow workers to sign cards authorizing their representation by Council 2.

More than 70 percent signed the cards, meaning a card check would be ordered. The independent Public Employees Relations Commission (PERC) checked the validity of the signatures. The process was completed June 23.

The new members represent all the city employees, except those who work for the fire and police departments.

"They have formed a large contract committee to start on the bargaining," Keenan says. "They are meeting weekly until the contract is completed."

"A major concern driving them to seek the security of a union was the bad economy and the result on the city's budget."

"They wanted a united voice."



City of Lakewood employees pose for a picture after selecting Council 2 as their union. They are (from left): Janelle Sorrell, Erica Meeks, Dallas Allen (in front), David Jones, Cynthia Wright, Rebecca Hendricks, Justin Dapping, Kris Nash and Tim Nash.



## Economy leads workers to join union

Concerned about changes in policy and procedures due to the economic conditions, all 10 workers at the Pierce County Wastewater Treatment Plant have joined Council 2 after signing authorization cards. The workers, who have been incorporated into Local 120, are working on their first contract.

## East Wenatchee employees organize

All 17 employees of the city of East Wenatchee, except those who work for the police and fire departments, have joined Council 2.

Earlier this year, the then unrepresented workers told Council 2 Staff Representative Don Boxford they were concerned that possible large budget cuts would affect their jobs. More than 70 percent signed authorization cards.

# 300 Timberland Library workers join Council 2

Although they already belonged to an existing employee association, workers at the Timberland Regional Library Staff Association decided earlier this year to switch to Council 2.

"They felt that, with the library system facing a budget shortfall of \$2.5 million for 2010, they needed the assistance of a larger organization with better resources," says Council 2 Director of Organizing Bill Keenan.

The system serves 421,000 people through 27 branches in Grays Harbor, Lewis, Mason, Pacific and Thurston counties.

Because the workers already had a contract and were an organized bargaining unit, the decision to join Council 2 was the subject of an internal secret ballot, similar to those processed by the Public Employees' Relations Commission. The election, held toward the end of August, saw an 86 percent voter turnout — largest in the organization's history — with 71 percent voting to join Council 2.

The employees' contract expires at the end of the year. Now they will bargain a new contract with Council 2's help.

### COUNCIL 2 EXECUTIVE BOARD

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**Ron Fredin**, Vice-President **Kathleen Etheredge**, Secretary/Treasurer

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### CARDS, From Page 1

validity of the signatures. If more than 70 percent of the cards are found to be valid, the decision of the employees is accepted and the members join the union.

"But in this case the employer insisted on a secret ballot — even though more than 70 percent of the authorization cards had been signed — rather than a card check," says Council 2 Director of Organizing Bill Keenan.

In late August, the parties agreed to ask

## 'The commission rejects this argument'

PERC to resolve the issue.

In rejecting the employer's argument, PERC said, "The wording on the authorization cards submitted is a showing of interest and in this case clearly indicates that by signing the card the employee wishes to be represented by the Washington State Council of County and City Employees for the purpose of collective bargaining."

"Just as people can be expected to attach importance to checks, contracts and other documents they sign in the course of their personal business affairs, employees can be expected to read and know the importance of authorization cards they sign for a union."

The commission ordered the card check and Council 2 was selected as the bargaining representative for the deputy attorneys' unit.

### COUNTY AND CITY EMPLOYEE

Official publication of the Washington State Council of County and City Employees

AFSCME, AFL-CIO  
 Published quarterly



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# Library staff praised for civic spirit

Faced with budget shortfalls and the prospect of layoffs, some Council 2 unions have agreed to take a day's furlough here and there during the year. But Local 2083, representing staff at the Seattle Public Library, agreed to take a full week of unpaid leave all at once: From August 31 to September 8.

The reason: The budget crisis facing the library is more severe than in other cases and needed more drastic action more quickly. And, as in other cases, the loss of a week's pay was preferable to layoffs.

Management praise for the move was expressed when, on August 31, Local 2083 members held a meeting at the library at which they turned an unpaid day into an opportunity to give back to the community. At the regular opening time of 10 a.m. staff distributed homemade lemonade to library patrons and passersby. Staff said they had volunteered for community projects during the week.



**City Librarian Susan Hildreth**

"The staff at the Seattle Public Library is fully aware of the economic hardship our country and community is going through," said Local 2083 President Dave Lonergan. "We see it every day as we help our patrons. We recognize that a library furlough poses great challenges to the citizens of Seattle, who in 1998 approved the largest building levy in Seattle history to build new libraries and remodel existing ones."

Ironically, Lonergan added, the cut comes in a service being more used by the public. "More people are coming through our doors than ever before, the number of holds placed on books has dramatically increased, and our DVD collection is used more than ever for family entertainment."

And, at a time of economic downturn, more people are looking to the library for resources to help them find employment and develop basic skills that make them more competitive in a difficult job market, Lonergan said.



**Library Board President Eric Liu**

Support for Local 2083 came from City Librarian Susan Hildreth. "I think it is great that they are really trying to make sure the community understands that they are taking a pay cut to use their time to help others," she said. "We would rather be providing the public with our services, but if we cannot, this is a good alternative."

Support also came from Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels, who attended the ceremony. "What is heartwarming to me is that they decided to take the week off without pay rather than see their fellow workers lose their jobs."

"In addition, they are not just taking that time off, but are putting it back into their community."

Library Board President Eric Liu said, "I want them to know on behalf of the trustees, how much we appreciate the dedication of the people who work at the library."

"It makes me sad that our budget requires the furlough, but it makes me proud to be here with everybody and see the passion, the civic spirit and the great sense of pride in ownership they demonstrate."



**Clockwise from top: Seattle Public Library staff, all Local 2083 members, line up behind President Dave Lonergan as he addresses onlookers; Lonergan interviewed for television; Nebiyu Abateneh and Darlene Hamilton hold banner; Local Executive Vice President Linda Saunto with her dog, Fiona; and Local Vice President Henry Brown speaks with Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels.**



# Award winner 'does work of two people'

Council 2 member Toni Elmendorf does the work of at least two people — and does it without complaint and with a smile on her face.

Those are among the reasons the Washington State Bar Association has awarded Elmendorf, who is Snohomish County Juvenile Court Coordinator, the Local Hero Award.

The award is given to those whom the bar association believes have rendered

noteworthy contributions to their communities.

Elmendorf has worked for Snohomish County since 1998 and is the court coordinator for three courtrooms: defender, dependency and commissioners' calendar for at-risk youth and truancy.

She is also the facilitator for the offender show-cause calendar.

The Bar Association says that Elmendorf's job is to ensure that all calendars

run smoothly and that every individual or family who comes to court knows when and where to be.

"She works with 50 to 60 families at a time in different courtrooms, coordinates the calendars and answers questions from the public and attorneys, all the while maintaining a calm, pleasant demeanor that helps to defuse the high stress levels that families appearing in juvenile court often experience," the bar association said

in a press release.

In his nomination, Rico Tessandore, president of the Snohomish County Bar Association said, "Many people say, and I agree, that they would need two people to replace her — and those two people would cover only half of her job."

"She does the work of two full-time individuals and does it without complaint and with a smile on her face. She's the bedrock of juvenile court."