



COUNTY & CITY

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Spring 2008

NEWS IN BRIEF

Scholarship applications due March 15

Applications for Council 2 Scholarships must be post-marked by March 15 to be eligible.

A total of 13 scholarships are available:

- Four \$2,000 scholarship awards to children who are dependents or under legal guardianship of a WSCCCE local union member;
- One \$5,000 yearly 4-year award to children who are dependents or under legal guardianship of a WSCCCE local union member; and
- Eight \$1,000 continuing education awards to members of a local union affiliated with WSCCCE.

Application forms can be downloaded from the Council 2 web site — www.council2.com — or can be obtained by calling Council 2's Everett office at 1-800-775-6418.

The scholarships are named in honor or in memory of union members. See Page 2 for details on the honorees.

AFSCME convention slated for June

The AFSCME 2008 International Convention will be held in San Francisco, from Sunday July 27 through August 1, 2008.

A number of delegates from Council 2 will attend the convention.

If you are interested in attending, consult your staff representative.

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How to work out whether you can afford to retire

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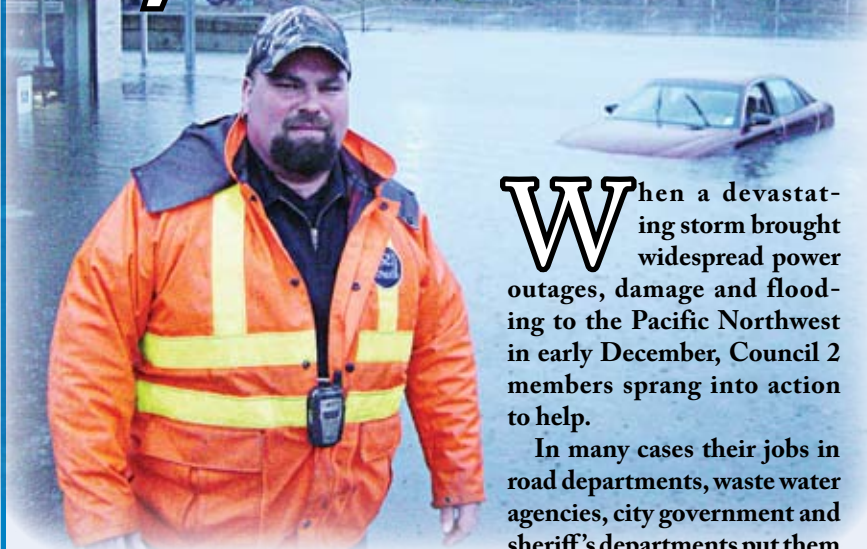
Members tell how they helped in storm

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Legislative Weekend in pictures

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When the storm hit, we were there



When a devastating storm brought widespread power outages, damage and flooding to the Pacific Northwest in early December, Council 2 members sprang into action to help.

In many cases their jobs in road departments, waste water agencies, city government and sheriff's departments put them on the front line in providing relief.

Many worked around the clock to remove downed trees, restore power, maintain sewer systems and clear water-logged streets.

Others set aside their normal duties to assist victims, some of whom had lost everything in the floods. They linked them with aid agencies, handed out bottled water and helped in every way they could.

It was a time for emergency action. And Council 2 members showed they were more than up to the task.

Their rapid response and tireless work helped avert what could have been a far worse disaster.



Read the stories of those who were there in their own words

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Major legislation unlikely

Policy changes from the State Legislature are likely to be a rare commodity this year.

For one thing, it is a short session, lasting only 60 days. The session began January 14, 2007 and ends in mid-March. Time, therefore, is short for elected officials to accomplish major changes in policy.

Another factor is the governor's race that takes place in the fall. Clearly, Gov. Chris Gregoire, a Democrat, is reluctant to rock the boat before she faces off against her opponent, Dino Rossi, in what could be a tight contest.

A third influence is that members of the majority Democratic Party are likely to avoid running up major budget increases during an election year. Although the state is projecting a \$1.4 billion surplus into 2009, Democrats want to be seen as fiscally responsible in the light of forecasts

See SESSION, Page 3

Further pension improvements doubtful

The State Legislature last year approved significant improvements to the pension systems to which most Council 2 members belong.

But unfortunately some employee groups sued the state over the new provisions. The state legislature is waiting until the litigation is over before it takes further action on most additional pension issues.

"It doesn't mean nothing will get done, or that the improvements won't be implemented, but it limits our expectations for new improvements," says Council 2 Deputy Director Pat Thompson.

Health-care plan would change negotiations

Washington State Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler has a plan that he says would change the way unions bargain for health insurance coverage.

He has placed the plan before the Washington State Legislature.

Kreidler, who is running for a third term this fall, outlined his plan at a luncheon held by Council 2 during the



Mike Kreidler speaks to Council 2 members

annual Legislative Weekend in Olympia held in the first week of February.

His proposal would guarantee coverage for everybody in the state of Washington for what is called catastrophic insurance.

"Every resident would receive catastrophic coverage for

health-care expenses above \$10,000," Kreidler told Council 2 members. "There would be no need for private insurance to cover anything above that level, but anyone who wished to do so could obtain private coverage up to that figure.

"It changes the picture when you are negotiating health benefits with your employer," Kreidler explained. "You would be talking only about health care under \$10,000. Catastrophic coverage would be off the table."

See KREIDLER, Page 2

Caucus system is a relic of the past; let's scrap it

CHRIS DUGOVICH

As I drove past Kamiak High School at close to two hours prior to the start of the caucus on Saturday February 9, you could already see a lot of activity for a Saturday morning. The 4-A High School is one of the state's largest with more than 2,000 students attending during the day. There's always something going on but nothing that brings in the number of people like this year's caucuses did.

I jumped in my car at 12:45 to proceed the approximate 1½ miles to my caucus. After proceeding a couple of blocks my driving progress quickly stopped. A traffic jam leading back as far as I could see was not going anywhere on the main drag leading to the high school. At this point it would have been quicker and more successful to walk from my home. Maybe even borrow one of my kids' bikes.

However I was stuck. So, knowing the subdivisions, I cut through the residential streets, reached within a mile of the school, parked and joined the growing number of people walking on the sidewalks. After a brisk march, I finally made it into a packed cafeteria to hear the final minutes of a surprise speech by Governor Gregoire. I arrived at 1:20 with 10 minutes to spare.

One thing was certain. The facility, the parking, the general accessibility was clearly overwhelmed. Later I heard estimates of attendees as high as 7,000 at Kamiak. I'd say 3,500 tops. I watched dozens of cars U-turn their way out of the mess while walking up to the caucus, in addition to observing many less vigorous citizens who gave up once they realized the length of the walk.

Once you did make it to the caucus, the cafeteria and the gymnasium were filled and very few people could hear or follow the proceedings. At one point at my precinct table somebody misplaced a sign-up sheet so a roll call was necessary and an additional sign-up sheet was needed for a few individuals.

In general, the press reported the huge numbers and a big turnout, but what they didn't report was that only approximately 10 percent of registered voters took part statewide, clearly surpassing the old caucus record. However, that is 1 million fewer voters than took part in our State's 2000 presidential primary.

The bottom line is that it's a bad system that on one hand touted large numbers but really was a dismal turnout if compared to primary participation numbers.

Communities don't have adequate facilities even for these numbers. My endurance test at Kamiak was duplicated at the Memorial Coliseum in Everett and hundreds of locations across the state. Countless numbers of our members and others are excluded due to their work schedules. The trend in absentee voting and all-mail ballots clearly shows that the easier it is to vote the bigger the turnout. Two hours in a packed facility filling out forms and trying to hear what's going on is not the way to include large numbers of people or make a rational representative decision.

The people who like it are the parties. It gives them control and they believe it builds participation. What it really does is turn a lot of people off by the time and energy one needs to devote to the process.

It's time for the political parties to recognize the fact that it's the 21st Century and scrap this relic of the past. How about a meaningful primary next time so the average individual with a real life doesn't have to devote half a day, be in excellent physical shape, have super hearing and the patience of Job to participate in a caucus.



Letter from the President

Run the numbers before you set your retirement date, adviser says

Before you retire, determine whether you can afford to do so, advises financial planner Richard Peck.

"I cannot imagine anybody retiring without some kind of a road map or some picture that gives you some confidence whether you have enough on which to retire," Peck told Council 2 members during the recent Legislative Weekend held in Olympia. Peck, who works from an office in Mukilteo, specializes in retirement planning for public employees.

"You might be looking forward to retirement, but one thing worse than having to go to work every day is retiring and having your money run out," Peck, a retired school teacher, said. "You don't want to be faced with having to decide in retirement whether to cut back on cable, vacations and so on.

"Worse yet, you don't want to find out your money will run out when you are 77 or 78. You want a plan where the assets never run out."

To determine whether you can afford to retire, start with a monthly budget, Peck said. Use it to work out how much you will spend in retirement. Make sure you include an estimate or how much medical insurance you will have to pay.

Next, look at your projected income in retirement. To determine how much it is likely to be, Peck suggested you find out what your retirement plan offers you.

If you are unsure, request an estimate of benefits, Peck said. It also is a good idea to attend a Public Employees Retirement System seminar that outlines Plans, 1, 2 and 3, Social Security benefits, the Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association (VEBA) and the Statewide Health Insurance Benefit Advisors (SHIBA).

Next, work out how much you will receive from other sources of income, such as savings, investments or rental income, Peck said.

The difference between your projected costs and income will determine whether you can afford to retire. Be sure to add in an inflation factor greater than the 3



Richard Peck talks on retirement issues at Legislative Weekend

to 4 percent consumer price index (CPI) reported by the government. Medical insurance premiums and medical expenses far exceed the CPI and affect seniors more. Using 5 percent inflation would be much safer, Peck suggested.

"You might say 'I want to retire because the state says I can,' but when you run the numbers you might realize you cannot afford to do so yet," Peck said.

Workers return to the Council 2 fold

Cowlitz County's juvenile detention officers are back in Council 2.

About 10 years ago the group joined another organization. But now the 25 officers have voted overwhelmingly to rejoin the union and have become members of Local 1262.

"They had heard a lot of good things from other county employees about Staff Representative Trina Young, who works out of the Olympia office," explains Council 2

Director of Organizing Bill Keenan. "They heard she was doing good things in that area and they wanted to join the bandwagon."

The officers also felt they would be better served by being part of the larger existing bargaining coalition, Keenan adds.

"When they were a guild, the on-call part-time employees were not represented in their unit," Keenan says. "But they were included when they filed with Council 2 and we will be bargaining for those employees' rights, too."

The Public Employees Relations Commission (PERC) has significantly changed its views and now includes all employees who meet the one-sixth work rule. The result is that if an employee works 29 hours a month or more that person must be included in a bargaining unit.

The vote to join Council 2 was taken December 10 last year. More than 70 percent of the group sent cards through PERC, meaning an election was unnecessary.

Scholarships named in honor of union members

Council 2 scholarships for 2008 have been named in honor of, or in memory of, several people.

\$2,000 AWARD

In memory of:

Jack Roberts, past member of Local 1135, Spokane County Road Department, husband of current member Terrie Roberts, Local 1553, Spokane County Courthouse. Roberts started working for Spokane County in 1975, in the Central Shop. He could handle almost any piece of equipment effortlessly, including graders, loaders and bulldozers. He retired in 1999 after 25 years. He died in September 2007, at age 68.

Herb Dionne, father of current member Sandy Griffin, Local 618, Thurston County. Dionne lived

most of his life in Spokane. He was a member of the bakers' union and believed so strongly in unions that when he started his own shop it was a union shop.

\$5,000 4-YEAR AWARD

In memory of:

Steve Uhinck, husband of current member Connie Uhinck, Local 1308 Kitsap County.

Uhinck died in a boating accident in November, 2006. He was active in the Amalgamated Transit Union 1384 and worked for Kitsap Transit for 19 years.

EIGHT \$1,000 AWARDS

In memory of:

Gregory James Beckham, past member of Local 270, City of Spokane;

Larry Tarrant, past member of

Local 307-CO, Clark County;

William "Frankie" Gray, past member of Local 1191-W, City of Walla Walla.

In honor of:

Retired members of Local 120, City of Tacoma:

Loni Simone, Application Developer Systems Analyst, retired in 2007 with 34 years of service;

Donna Wendt, GIS Analyst, who retired in 2007 with 34 years of service and was named WAURISA GIS professional of the year for 2007;

Roland Huske, Database Analyst, retired in 2008 with 34 years of service; and **Susan Kunkel**, Application Developer Systems Analyst, who retired in 2007 with 28 years of service and was Local 120 vice president and shop steward.

KREIDLER, from Page 1

Kreidler said his plan would also mean that those who retire before Medicare kicks in would have to find such coverage only up to \$10,000.

"It is much easier to buy that than coverage up to a million dollars," he said. "My plan would drastically change the environment you are in. It brings about a profound change that is sorely needed."

Kreidler said figures show that those who are uninsured are twice as likely to die if they contract cancer than those who are insured. But the problem is bigger than that.

"Many of us are underinsured," he said. "As a result, every 30 seconds somebody files for medical bankruptcy because of medical-related expenses. Two-thirds of those people have insurance, but

it is insufficient. So the big picture involves the uninsured as well as the underinsured."

Kreidler said support for his plan is starting to gain momentum, but there is resistance in the Legislature. "Let's put it on the ballot and have the people vote for it," he said. "I look forward to working with you to make sure these changes take place."

Storm damage resembled St. Helens aftermath

TRINA YOUNG
Council 2 Staff Representative

I represent members who work in several of the counties that were hit hardest by the storm in December, including Lewis, Thurston and Pacific County. Thurston and Lewis counties were stricken with flood damage and Pacific County was hit with extremely high winds.

I drove to South Bend in Pacific

County on the Friday after the storm and I can't even describe the magnitude of the damage I saw. The closest I have to compare it to are the photos we saw when Mt. St. Helens erupted in 1980, of millions of trees laying in rows like toothpicks.

It is truly amazing to see huge trees, some that are up to 5 feet in diameter, that have been broken in half by the hurricane forces of the wind and entire stands of timber laying on the ground.

In some places the trees fell across roadways on both sides so that it created a tunnel that made the roads impassible before road crews could clear them away.

The Pacific County weather station's wind gauge broke after recording a gust of 149 mph. There were numerous mudslides and bridges washed out.

Our members were out working in those conditions, trying to clear roads only to have more trees fall as soon as they were done. They also had to do emergency road repairs to fix washouts caused by stormwater runoff, rising rivers and mudslides.

Some workers were "loaned" to other counties; some had their duties diverted to help out in shelters and soup kitchens.

The Pacific County Public Works members were out working at the height of the storm. Crews were removing downed trees from the roadways to ensure public access and they worked with the PUD crews to clear debris and trees from power lines. They also did temporary road building to repair washouts in the roadways.

The cleanup operations continued for several weeks.

HOW WE HELPED IN THE WILD WEATHER

I participated in building evaluations for life and safety issues for the City of Centralia on December 8 and 9. Our team looked at about 75 structures over the two days. About 500 homes were in the flood area within the city limits.

We experienced everything from "no damage" to water 5 to 6 feet deep in the building. Those that had elevated their structures were safe.

I was impressed with the positive spirit. "We'll get it cleaned up." "Repairs are under way." "I have help." Our efforts were as much public relations work as building inspection. Everyone had a story.

— Gary Allsup, Building Inspector, City of Lacey, Local 618-L



Members of Pacific County Assessors Office pose with car damaged in storm. Front: Becky Nissell and Lisa Olsen, Local 367C secretary. Second row: Sheryl Crose, Loni Hooper, Local 367C executive board, and Connie Williams, Local 367C Labor Management Committee member. Third row: Dan Childress, Dennis Bryant, Local 367C shop steward and Bruce Walker, assessor.

During the aftermath of the storm we sent two of our 10-yard trucks and a couple of loaders to South Thurston County to help in clean-up efforts in the Rochester area.

The area originally was not given FEMA relief up front.

We spent two or three days down there helping with the clean-up and fallout from the flooding.

Many of our members put in extensive overtime as a result of the storm.

— Paul Clerget, President Local 618-O, City of Olympia

During the day of the storm we spent a lot of time clearing water off streets that were under water.

In that way, we saved many houses from being flooded.

We used vacator trucks to extract water that flooded the streets when the drains became blocked or could not cope with

the runoff.

The trucks, which can each hold 2,000 gallons of water, are usually used to clean up catch basins, but proved extremely useful in removing water from the streets.

Several of the trucks operated non-stop for many hours.

— Aric Mickelson, President, Local 618-L, City of Lacey, Department of Transportation

When the storm hit, our area was out of power for four days, the longest outage in my 23 years here. During that time we kept the water running and prevented the sewer system from overflowing by moving mobile generators around. We worked under sustained strong winds for 40 hours.

Many worked up to 42 hours overtime in four days. Our people did a heck of a job.

— Ron Hebish, President Local 367-R, City of Raymond

Our members assisted flood victims in a variety of ways, spending much time listening to their stories and linking them with aid agencies, such as the Red Cross and the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA). Many people had lost everything.

Two members, Jill Kangas and Lisa Arthur, who work in the Emergency Management Office, worked around the clock and others worked extended hours.

Most of this work was new to us as we were unfamiliar with the forms involved, some of which were complex. But we jumped in and helped as much as we could.

— Sheri Wold, President Local 1341-S, Lewis County

Several of our union members worked in the Emergency Operations Center for many 12-hour days. Road crews worked 10- to 15-hour days cleaning up fallen trees and repairing roads.

Because the annex and South County buildings were closed, many staff were assigned to help out in shelters and soup kitchens.

The staff members also took press releases to the newspapers in Oregon and went door-to-door with flyers.

Leah Heintz from the Health Department had her house flooded and her family lost a lot of their belongings.

— Deb Kelly, President, Local 367-C, Pacific County Courthouse

SESSION, From Page 1

of a troubled economy ahead.

Any moves to increase spending, Democrats believe, might give fodder to the Republicans during the campaign.

"That does not mean our work stops," says Council 2 Deputy Director Pat Thompson. "We always are concerned about making sure the services our members perform are adequately funded."

The major issue on which Council 2 is working is to try to persuade the Legislature to reconsider its action last year when it reinstated Initiative 747, which placed a 1 percent cap on property tax increases. The Legislature reinstated the provision in a one-day session on November 29, 2006 after the State Supreme Court overturned the original initiative, which was passed in 2001.

"The increases used to be subject to a 6 percent-a-year cap before the initiative," Thompson says. "Now it is 1 percent. We are looking for a more thoughtful approach to the issue."

With the housing market cooling, local governments will continue to struggle with an increase that is well below the inflation rate, Thompson adds.

During the Legislative Weekend held in Olympia in the first week of February, Council 2 members handed state legislators a letter from Council 2 as well as the Association of Washington Cities and the Washington State Association of Counties. (See picture Page 4.) The letter points out that the levy limit has significantly strained many budgets, particularly small and rural cities and counties.

The letter urges legislators to support a cap based on the implicit price deflator, which is a measure of inflation based on the prices of the bundle of goods that make up the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as well as changes in the bundle of goods themselves.


Were this measure to be used, the property tax increases would be capped at 2.084 percent during this year, close to the average for the last decade.




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Seeing the legislative process up close



Attendees at the Legislative Weekend pose for a picture in the Rotunda of the Capitol building in Olympia.

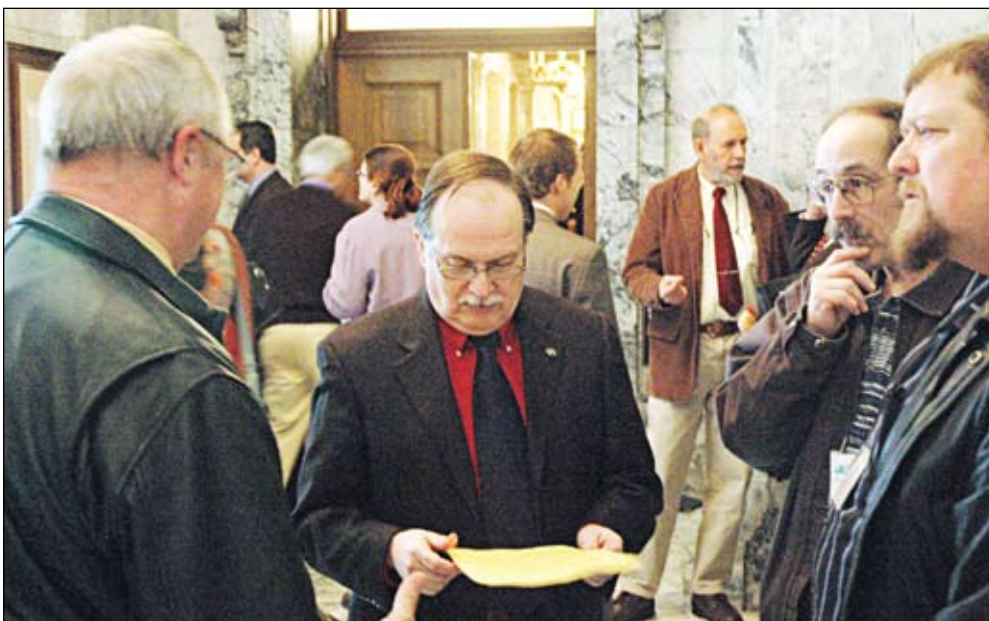
About 100 Council 2 members from around the state attended the Legislative Weekend held in Olympia from Jan. 30 to Feb. 1.

They toured the Capitol building, listened in on debates in the House and Senate and spoke with legislators on issues affecting them. They also attended receptions, listened to a luncheon talk by State Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler (see report on Page 1) and attended a

presentation on retirement planning from financial planner Richard Peck (see report on Page 2).

For a number of attendees, the weekend was the second, third or even more of its sort that they have attended. For others, it was an introduction to the legislative procedure that will give them a new insight into the process and what it means for them. For all, it was a meaningful weekend that they are glad they did not miss.

MORE PICTURES of the Legislative Weekend are on the Web at: www.council2.com/legweekend2008



Photograph: Cameron Johnson, Local 113

State Rep. Mike Sells (D-38) (center) reads a statement on property taxes handed to him by Council 2 members. With him are, from left: Council 2 Staff Representative Bill Dennis, Bob Springer and Rich Porter, both with Local 113, City of Everett.



Tour guide outlines political process to Council 2 members seated in Senate gallery.



Posing at the Friday night reception during the Legislative Weekend are (from left): Yvette Lewis, Staff Representative in Yakima; Carol Travis, Local 8744 (Prosser Memorial Hospital); Mike Antijunti, Mary Hurst and Mike Haider, all of Local 1122, City of Yakima.