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COUNTY & CITY EMPLOYEE



# COUNTY & CITY

# EMPLOYEE

AFSCME AFL-CIO

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Summer 2004

## NEWS

### IN BRIEF

#### Presidents' conference returns

The Council 2 Presidents' Conference is back. It's all new and it's better than ever before.

The first in the new series of conferences will be held October 29 and 30 in the Wenatchee Convention Center. The conference is open to the presidents of all Council 2 Locals. Among the topics to be covered will be collective bargaining, the nation's political races and legal trends. Registration deadline is September 23.

#### Receive news when it happens—by email

To hear about fast-breaking Council 2 news, send us your home (not your work) email address. You will receive notification of events, newsletters and matters of importance to members.

Your email address will be kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside Council 2.

To be added to the list, send your home email address to: [c2everett@council2.com](mailto:c2everett@council2.com) or complete the form on our Web site, [www.council2.com](http://www.council2.com).

#### AFSCME scholarship applications open

Council 2 members have been invited to apply for the 2005 AFSCME Family Scholarship Program, open to graduating seniors who are children of AFSCME members. Deadline is December 31.

For details and application forms go to [www.afscme.org](http://www.afscme.org), email [education@afscme.org](mailto:education@afscme.org), or write to AFSCME Family Scholarship program, c/o Education Department, 1625 L Street, NW, Washington DC 20036.

## INSIDE

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## Council 2 helps defeat Eyman initiative

Tim Eyman's Initiative 864 was defeated at 11 a.m. on July 2 when he and cohorts Mike and Jack Fagan arrived in Olympia with a claimed 156,000 signatures — well below the 250,000 needed to assure a spot on the November ballot.

I-864 proposed a radical 25 percent local property tax cut—the most severe attack on local government ever proposed

by Eyman—and would have come just as hundreds of cities, counties, and local taxing districts are reeling from the impacts of I-747, Eyman's successful 2001 initiative that placed an arbitrary 1 percent cap on the growth of local property taxes.

"We should all breathe a sigh of relief that I-864 is dead," says Chris Dugovich, President and Executive Director of Council 2. "We extend our thanks to

members across Washington who volunteered their time and energy to tracking signature gatherers and educating voters about the dangers this initiative poses."

In particular, Dugovich points to Council 2-led programs that educated voters about both the devastating potential impacts of I-864, as well as the corrup-

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Ron Sims speaks at Council 2's 1999 biennial convention

## Council 2 backs Sims for governor

Council 2 has endorsed Ron Sims for governor.

"Ron has been a long-time friend of the Washington State Council of County and City Employees," says Chris Dugovich, President and Executive Director. "He has earned—and deserves—our support in his bid to become governor."

Council 2's long relationship with Sims dates back to the days when he worked as a staffer in the Washington State Legislature. The relationship continued through the years he served on the County Council and in his first and second terms as King County

Executive.

Ron always has been a believer in the collective bargaining process, which has led to countless reasonable contract settlements between our membership and King County, Dugovich says. The relationship has been built on mutual respect.

During this year's campaign for governor, Sims has shown his leadership by proposing a plan to reform the state's antiquated tax system. It would lower taxes on 80 percent of the working households in Wash-

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## Spokane County talks drag on and on

Contract negotiations between Spokane County government and a coalition of unions — primarily Council 2 Locals — representing some 1,350 workers have been dragging on for 13 months. And still no end is in sight.

Not even the help since March of a mediator from the Public Employment Relations Commission has advanced the negotiations as much as the unions had hoped it would. "There has been some progress, but it has been at a snail's pace," says Gordon Smith, Council 2 Staff Representative in Spokane, who is involved in the negotiations.

"We consider this to be a very ugly situation."

Council 2, with 1,100 County workers and 13 different Locals — representing deputy prosecutors, corrections officers, support staff, road crew and others in a variety of positions — is the largest union involved in the negotiations. Joining Council 2 in the coalition are Local 17, the Public Works Guild and Local 280.

The coalition is concerned about the rapidly approaching deadline of December 31 this year, which marks the end of the automatic 12-month extension of



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## Tentative agreement finally reached

Perhaps it was inevitable that the largest single organizing gain for Council 2 should also have produced the longest mediation session over the terms of a contract that anyone can remember.

Lasting a mammoth 15 hours, the negotiations finally resulted in a tentative agreement between the King County Library System administration and the employees.

Workers will vote on the contract dur-

ing September.

It was almost two years ago, on December 3, 2002, that 550 King County Library workers voted to join the ranks of Council 2 in the largest local government election in memory that the union has won. In April 2003, work began on negotiating a first-time contract for the employees.



The negotiations proved demanding. At one stage, employees issued leaflets at branch libraries throughout King County, protesting library management's positions on wages, benefits and working conditions.

The mediation session, held July 15 and moderated by State Mediator

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# Health insurance crisis demands we change to Kerry/Edwards team

**CHRIS DUGOVICH**



## Letter from the President

Health insurance and the ability to pay the premiums have reached a crisis level for our membership across the state. Double-digit premium increases during the last four years have caused individuals in some instances to make unthinkable decisions.

Collective bargaining teams across the state have been consistently confronted with cutting benefits, raising deductibles and increasing co-payments just to keep increases from going beyond the teens to the 20s and 30s.

Dependent care is going by the wayside. Where it is a benefit it is increasingly difficult to maintain. Any attempt to gain family coverage in jurisdictions where it has not been provided before is "mission impossible." No doubt in some jurisdictions, due to large payroll deductions, our membership is choosing not to cover family members. They are pinning their hopes on a "healthy year."

In fewer than three years a Snohomish County family has gone from not paying any of its premium payment to paying an average of more than \$190 a month. In Spokane County right now County management's objective in contract negotiations is to reduce increased costs by cutting the health insurance plan and changing it to a much less desirable plan.

The crisis is real—it's affecting every one of our members and even the traditionally best-funded jurisdictions are having difficulty getting a handle on the spiraling costs.

A national solution is needed now. Members of the current administration in Washington D.C. have offered no solutions and virtually sit on their hands as more and more individuals lose their insurance or settle for much less. It's only going to get worse.

All of us need to be aware that—unless Kerry and Edwards have the opportunity to propose and push some real health insurance legislation — many of us four years from now may be paying for our family's health needs directly out of our take-home pay. We will join the additional 2 million Americans who lost their health insurance during the last four years.

If these circumstances continue we will all need a lot of healthy years.

### LIBRARY, from Page 1

Ken Latsch, started at 9 a.m. and ended at 11 p.m. when a tentative agreement was finally reached on the contract — the first since the workers joined Council 2, says Bill Keenan, Council 2's Director of Organizing. Keenan spearheaded the original campaign to organize the library workers.

"We believe the contract is a satisfactory agreement that contains all the essentials," Keenan says. They are: Grievance arbitration, just-cause termination, progressive discipline, seniority protections, union security, modest wage increases and medical benefit protection.

Keenan praised the bargaining committee — Marsha Iversen, Laura Ritter, Susan Veltfort, Don Isaacs and Cindy Richardson — for the "incredible amount of time" they put into the effort. "They spent hundreds of hours and a huge amount of their own personal vacation time," Keenan says, explaining that bargaining time had to be split half-half between work time and vacation time.

"Their perseverance paid off," he adds. "They probably hung in there longer and put in as great an effort as any first-time committee I have ever seen. They certainly deserve a lot of the credit for reaching this agreement."

Keenan also thanks John Cole, who started the negotiations before retiring from Council 2 in February this year and Diana Pregelber, the assigned staff representative, for putting a lot of effort into getting the final result. Latsch, the mediator, had assisted both sides in reaching an agreement, he adds.

# 2004 Scholarship Awards

## Dependent Scholarship Awards

In memory of Todd Huff, past member of Spokane County Jail Corrections, Local 492; Tuan Nguyen, past member of city of Kent, Local 2617; and Shawn Valdez, past member of City of Yakima, Local 1122

Recipient	Member	Member's Local
Wayne Barthule	Michelle Barthule	618 – Thurston County
Benjamin Blacker	Joan Blacker	113 – City of Everett
Ernest Fix	Thomas Fix	21-RD – City of Redmond
Allen Unzelman	Larry Unzelman	1341 – Lewis County Road Dept.



**Benjamin Blacker**

## Continuing Education Awards

In honor of Mark Kirschenmann, current member of Yakima County Juvenile Court, Local 87-P; Toni Kirschenmann, current member of Yakima County Juvenile Court, Local 87-P; Alpha O'Laughlin, former member of City of Walla Walla, Local 1191-W; and Linda McGovern, past member of Yakima County Courthouse, Local 87 and Yakima County Health District, Local 87-H

Recipient	Local
Michelle Barthule	618 – Thurston County
Sarah Greene	618 – Thurston County
Thomas Jarrard	109-E – Snohomish County Engineers
Karen Richardson	120 – Pierce County Health Department
Marcia Rutan	109 – Snohomish County Road Department
Vanessa Spinazola	1652-M – Seattle/King Co. Private Industry Council
Heather Stiles	492-J – Spokane County Juvenile
Allan Wahl	109-E – Snohomish County Engineers



**Thomas Jarrard**

## Summer School for Union Women Award

In Honor of Pam (Swenson) Dittloff, former member of Thurston County Local 618

Recipient	Local
Sherry Bingman	874-HC – Benton County



**Vanessa Spinazola**



**Sherry Bingman**



**Ernest Fix**



**Heather Stiles**



**Allen Unzelman**

# She meets her favorite author — thanks to a Council 2 scholarship

Dear Chris, Yvette and members of the Scholarship Committee:

I have returned from a most wonderful and inspiring week at Chautauqua, New York, in part thanks to your support.

At Chautauqua I attended the Highlights Foundation (as in the magazine for kids) Conference for writers of children's literature. One hundred conferees and approximately 30 staff and presenters converged to share about writing, publication, books, and the challenges of integrating writing time into full lives.

Conferees came from various parts of the globe, including Raditka from India, Sheryl from Australia, Judy from Mexico City and Katharine from Kenya.

There were also the best authors (including three Newbery award winners), publishers, editors and professors all completely committed to supporting us and encouraging us.

Sharon Creech is one of my very favorite authors (*Walk Two Moons*, *Chasing Red Bird*) and she herself was a Chautauqua

student for two summers! Now she is a Newbery Award winner and was a surprise guest presenter. I was thrilled to be selected to go up on the stage with her to read lines. You can see my happy face as she signs my book in the photo!

I came back deeply inspired and redirected in the writing of my book currently titled *Silver Girl*. I also have an editor from a New York publishing house whom I engaged to provide editing comments on my manuscript in 18 months. So I now have a new goal and will get feedback from one of the best editors in the business!

I was feeling very financially concerned when I signed up for this conference, but at the soul level felt it was the right step.

Your \$500 award was such a fantastic affirmation of this leap of faith and I am most deeply grateful.

Chautauqua and the Highlights Conference were life changing. Thank you again so much for selecting me for the award.

Most sincerely,  
Marcia Rutan



**Marcia Rutan**



**Sharon Creech signs Marcia Rutan's book**



**EYMAN, from Page 1**

tion of the initiative process itself through the use of paid signature gatherers.

"Council 2 members went the extra mile in support of their communities, their families, and their jobs," says Dugovich. "The rejection of I-864 is a victory for essential services, for local government and for our members."

Among those who worked tirelessly over six weeks to counter the efforts of the signature gatherers was librarian Cameron Johnson, a member of Local 113.

"Library members played an active role, but hundreds of government workers—and their supporters—from all over the state contributed to the campaign's success," Johnson says.

They cruised Puget Sound looking for signature gatherers, held up signs next to them and persuaded store managers to ban them from their premises.

"We raised the consciousness of a lot of people in the state about signature gathering," Johnson adds. "We went in like David against Goliath, but we learned fast and had a big impact." He thanks Council 2 staff for all the effort they put into helping defeat the measure.

Next on the horizon are continued efforts to reform the signature gathering

process in the Washington Legislature, including bills that would change the way signature gatherers are paid and adding accountability by making petitioners sign to verify the signatures they collect.

"The goal is to reduce fraud and protect the initiative process from further abuse," says Council 2 Deputy Director Pat Thompson, who is leading lobbying efforts for the legislation.

Thompson points to efforts of the Voter Education Committee, led by Council 2, that included automated calls, aggressive earned media, and radio ads featuring King County Prosecutor Norm Maleng — all warning voters to pay attention to the details and ask questions before signing a petition carried by a paid signature gatherer.

"These programs were a success, and give us momentum for the future," says Thompson.

Yet another battle looms in the future with Eyman, who has pledged to return in 2005 with another local tax cutting initiative. "We're ready for him," says Dugovich. "Unless he is bankrolled by a wealthy special interest, Eyman has now failed two years in a row to qualify an initiative. He can keep pushing these bad ideas, and we will continue to fight — and win."

# Workers from new city join Council 2

Twenty-seven workers have joined Council 2 from the new City of Spokane Valley.

The new members are employees of the City, minus police and fire workers. They contacted Council 2 about a year ago, inquiring about organizing.

Council 2 set the process going and on August 3, Council 2 won the election, which was a card check, indicating enough support for the union to make a formal ballot unnecessary.

The new Local is being set up and negotiations on a first-time contract will start soon.

Many who went to work for the new city—formed about two years ago and covering a population of 80,000 residents—formerly worked for the City of Spokane or the Spokane County government. As such they were Council 2 members and could decide to join again.

All the new city's workers—with the exception of police, road and fire positions, whose jobs have been contracted out—are eligible to become union members, providing the potential for a substantial Local in the future.



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the contract, which technically expired December 31, 2003.

If no agreement has been reached by December 31, the County could try to declare a legally defensible impasse, Smith explains, which would enable it to impose its own contract terms. But such a declaration could not be made if there has been some movement in the talks, however minuscule, he explains. Such movement, although microscopic, is being made, Smith adds.

The main sticking points in the high-stakes negotiations are medical benefits and wages. The County is asking us to make dramatic and sweeping changes to our medical plans," Smith explains. "They want to modify the plans in a way that would make them more expensive for employees and less costly for them."

He says the County wants to take what has come to be called "three bites out of the same apple," Smith explains. The administration seeks to:

- Increase deductibles, co-payments and the amount employees have to meet on prescription drugs. And they want employees to pay a portion of their medical premiums themselves.

- Impose a three-year wage freeze.

- Impose a two-tiered wage and benefits system — one for new hires and one for existing employees. New hires would have less sick leave and would take twice as long to top out on the salary scale. And new hires would have no medical benefits until they have completed their probation.

"That can be seen as a union-busting technique when you have different sets of employees with different benefits working alongside one another," Smith says.

The coalition has been prepared to accept a reasonable compromise. "We realize that the medical crisis is national and that these are not the best of economic times," says Smith. "Our own proposals would save them \$1.5 million a year.

"We can live with a bite, or a bite-and-a-half, but not three bites. That would unravel years of gains we have made since the 1950s." The county seems particularly insistent on switching the existing medical insurance plans to the Public Employment Benefits Board (PEBB) package of plans, which are the same plans that cover many state employees, Smith says.

He adds that during the negotiations the chief negotiator resigned and the Spokane County CEO also stepped down. In addition, two commissioners on the three-person County Board are not standing for re-election in November (see accompanying report).

## Commissioners' decision creates opportunity for Council 2

Two members of the three-person Spokane County Board of Commissioners have decided not to run for re-election, providing "a tremendous opportunity" for Council 2 in the November elections, says the union's Deputy Director Pat Thompson.

"These openings provide us with the chance to fill those seats with people who would be more supportive of workers and their families than the present incumbents have been," Thompson says.

The board is responsible for providing legislative and administrative services to Spokane County. It adopts and enacts the budget, establishes expenditures and sets policy.

The commissioners who are stepping down are John Roskelley, a Democrat, who fills the District 1 seat, and Kate McCaslin, a Republican, who represents District 2.

A number of candidates have filed for the positions and the affected Locals are working together to come up with a strategy for winning in November, Thompson adds. "I believe this provides us with the best opportunity to fix things in the short and long term, especially as the Locals are in contract negotiations," Thompson says.

## Non-profit agency staff chooses to join union

Employees of Northwest Immigrant Rights Project elected to join Council 2 in early August.

Based in Seattle, with an office in Granger (near Yakima), the non-profit legal services organization has been providing legal representation and community education to low-income refugees and immigrants in Washington State for the past 20 years.

The 18 employees—attorneys, legal advocates and office support staff—chose to become members of Council 2 in a near-unanimous election conducted by

the National Labor Relations Board. They were not represented by any labor organization before the vote.

The staff members called Council 2 offices on a referral after being told of potential changes in their employment guidelines being considered by the board of directors.

They expressed strong interest in joining after a series of meetings in which Council 2 representatives outlined what the union could do for them.

Negotiations on their first contract are expected to start soon.

**SIMS, from Page 1**

ington State.

Dugovich adds, "This is the type of proposal that should be made by a candidate for governor. But too many times political expediency seems to override what's really needed to promote fairness for working families.

"Sims has never opted for that approach, instead risking some of his popularity to promote what's really needed to move Washington forward."

Council 2 is urging its membership to support Sims for governor. The primary election will be held September 14.

COUNCIL 2 EXECUTIVE BOARD		
<b>OFFICERS</b> Chris Dugovich, President/Executive Director Ron Fredin, Vice-President Judy Johnson, Secretary/Treasurer		
<b>DISTRICT ONE</b> 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)	<b>DISTRICT TWO</b> Doug Peterson, Local 21 (City of Seattle) Kathleen Senecaut, Local 2617 (City of Kent)	<b>DISTRICT THREE</b> Patti Cox, Local 3787 (Pierce County Library) Conni Uhinck, Local 1308 (Kitsap County) John Ohlsen, Local 120 (City of Tacoma)
<b>DISTRICT FOUR</b> Kevin James, Local 275 (Grays Harbor County) Sandy Griffin, Local 618 (Thurston County)	<b>DISTRICT FIVE</b> Tracy Arney, Local 2699 (Columbia River Mental Health) Bill McEntire, Local 307-CO (Clark County)	<b>DISTRICT SIX</b> Carol Travis, Local 874-HC (Prosser Memorial Hospital/Benton County) Yvette Lewis, Local 1122 (City of Yakima)
<b>DISTRICT SEVEN</b> Chris Wood, Local 1476-AC (Asotin County) Pam Fitzgerald, Local 1191-W (City of Walla Walla)	<b>DISTRICT EIGHT</b> Ken Thomas, Local 492 (Spokane County) Dave Hanshaw, Local 270 (City of Spokane) Amie Swenson, Local 1553 (Spokane County)	<b>DISTRICT NINE</b> Paula Laws, Local 433 (City of Coeur d'Alene)

## COUNTY AND CITY EMPLOYEE

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Delegates to the International Convention are, from left: Cindy Richardson and Marci Pfeiffer (Local 1857, King County Library System); Kevin Stevens; Sunyoung Yi; Bill Dennis, Staff Representative, and Linda Saunto (Local 2803, Seattle Public Library).

Below (from top): Convention scene; Democratic candidate John Kerry speaks; table display.



About 5,000 delegates gathered in Anaheim in June for the AFSCME International Convention. Among them were about 200 from Council 2.

During the week-long convention, the delegates:

- Heard a number of leading Americans outline their priorities for the labor movement and the country.
- Attended workshops on such issues as organizing and services related to collective bargaining.
- Approved 107 resolutions and three constitutional amendments.

The speakers included Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry, who told delegates that, as president, he would provide states with \$25 billion so that "we can put an end to painful budget cuts that hurt local services and the workers who provide them."

Other speakers were former president Bill Clinton — who said he probably would not have been elected without AFSCME's support — Rev. Jesse Jackson, New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer and AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson.

Among the decisions made at the convention was one to add 50 cents to the International Per Capita Tax, AFSCME's portion of the dues paid by union members. The increase comes into effect on January 1, 2005 and will sunset in June 2006.

The increase means members will pay an additional \$9, spread over 18 months, to AFSCME.

The additional money will allow AFSCME to continue assisting organizing new members across the country and will be added to existing resources to turn the political tide at a time when confusing policies are coming out of Washington D.C.

The convention delegates unanimously supported the dues increase.

AFSCME President Gerald W. McEntee was re-elected to a new four-year term and at one stage during the convention, AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer William Lucy said he would stand down. But at the last minute, at the urging of delegates, he decided, if elected, to remain in the post and was unanimously chosen to do so.

## How she made it to Democratic convention

When Local 113's Carolyn Johnston set out to earn a seat at the Democratic National Convention, she had little idea of what lay ahead of her.

But, as the City of Everett landscaper looks back, she is pleased she took that first step that set her on the road to Fleet Center in Boston in July.

It all began because, over the years, her mother-in-law had insisted she "get involved," recalls Johnston. This year, concerned about the direction the country is taking under President Bush and his lack of interest in the middle class, she decided to do so. She thought attend-



Carolyn Johnston at convention

ing a Democratic precinct caucus might be a good start. When Council 2 Staff Representative Rob Sprague mentioned that AFSCME sponsors attendance at the Republican and Democratic conventions for anyone who earns a seat at the national conventions that was the challenge Johnston needed.

Learning as she went, Johnston discovered she needed to be selected for a series of ever-higher precinct and caucus levels until she made it to the national convention. She found, too, that, at various stages over some six months, she had to volunteer for positions, give three-minute speeches a number of times, prepare a flyer, write a letter of intent and attend long meetings (one lasted from 9 a.m. until 12:30 a.m. the following day).

Eventually her reward came: She was chosen as a delegate to the national convention and was able to participate in the nomination of John Kerry for president.

"I was very dedicated to learning the process," Johnston says. "That's how I did it." Johnston adds that she believes in Democratic values "and I truly believe in John Kerry and I conveyed that conviction to those who elected me."

Attending the convention "was wonderful," she says. "I would like to thank everyone who helped me get there."

## Walt Bailey always was a distinctive presence

You always knew when Walt Bailey was around. For one thing, he was a strong presence everywhere he went. For another, he was passionate about union causes, determined they should be known and advanced.

But perhaps most of all you knew he was there because of his distinctive red suspenders.

"He wore them everywhere he went," says Trina Young, Council 2 Staff Representative, who knew Bailey for 26 years through working with Local 275, which represents Grays Harbor workers.

"His red suspenders were something I always expected to see at labor functions across the state," adds Chris Dugovich, Council 2 President and Executive Di-

rector. It seemed Bailey was always there when union matters were being debated or promoted. And he was always among the first in line when jobs were being assigned.

His presence is gone now. Bailey, 67, died in May and the union movement has lost a staunch advocate and a hard-working supporter.

"He was a long-term active member who will be missed by all," says Dugovich.

Many strikes took place in Grays Harbor County during the 80s and 90s, says Young.

"During that time, Walt and other members of 275 often worked in a coalition with other unions. He was very

passionate about the union and about democracy."

Bailey worked for the City of Aberdeen, much of it with the Engineering Department, for 27 years before retiring in 1998. Always involved in the Local, Bailey also served as president of Friends of Labor and was active in the Democratic Party.

Even after he retired, he remained involved with labor and politics and in representing Council 2, Young adds. "One of my favorite memories of Walt is when he was standing on a picket line holding these big black signs. Walt had metal rivets all the way around his."

"Nobody dared to cross that picket line when he was there."

