



# COUNTY & CITY

# EMPLOYEE

AFSCME AFL-CIO

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### AFSCME's Seth Hendler dies

Seth Hendler, who worked with Councils as Area Director in the Northwest region on behalf of AFSCME for more than six years, died earlier this year.

He fought a courageous battle against stomach and liver cancer for a year.

Before taking on his last position, Hendler worked for the Council in Illinois and for AFSCME headquarters in Washington, D.C.

### Local leader finds training rewarding

For almost 15 years, as president of Local 1191W Alpha O'Laughlin encouraged fellow Council 2 members to attend secretary-treasurer training sessions.

"I had never thought about going myself," O'Laughlin says. But when she attended a recent session in Spokane she found it fascinating.



O'Laughlin

"I was surprised I got so much out of it and I would encourage officers in general, and not only secretaries and treasurers to attend at least one," O'Laughlin says.

Secretary-Treasurer workshops are conducted every year at various locations around the state.

### Scholarship applications are due by July 1

Applications for the Jerry Clark Memorial Scholarship must be postmarked by July 1, 2002.

The scholarship is awarded to a student who is a sophomore majoring in political science, has a grade point average of at least 3.0 and is a child or financially dependent grandchild of an AFSCME member.



The winner, selected by lottery from eligible applicants, will receive \$10,000 a year for the junior and senior years of study as well as an opportunity to intern with the International Union's Political Action Department.

Application forms are available from Council 2 or online at [www.afscme.org](http://www.afscme.org).

THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW



Tom Frantz demonstrates how he broke an inmate's fall

## Officer saves woman as she takes 20-foot plunge

A heroic act by Spokane County Corrections Officer Tom Frantz probably saved a woman's life earlier this year.

Frantz, a member of Local 492, caught the woman and broke her fall as she leaped from a railing in the corrections center.



Part of the reason he was able to act as he did is through the union encouraging the administration to give him the training he has received, Frantz adds.

"I am proud that he is a member of our union," adds Gordon Smith, Staff Representative in Council

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Officers of Local 1553 are: Standing, from left: Terrie Roberts, secretary; Amie Swenson, president; Deanna Walter, Sergeant at arms; Michealanne O'Neill, vice-president; Coreen Harty, and treasurer. Sitting: Wanda Clark, chief shop steward

## Local members buy chess sets for detainees

Soon after Coreen Harty started working as a volunteer mentor for the Spokane County Juvenile Detention Center in October last year, she learned that the inmates enjoyed playing chess.

"The juveniles told me about a chess competition that they have at 8 p.m. after their evening snack," she explains. "But they said that although many wanted to play, they had only two chess sets and so most of them

could not do so."

That set Harty — who is Local 1553 Treasurer and a Genetic Testing Coordinator with the Spokane County Prosecutors Office — thinking of ways that she could help.

After all, it was not for nothing that she had been named "The Nicest Person in the State" for 2002 by the Washington Association of Prosecuting

See CHESS, Page 2

## Council 2 launches massive campaign

Council 2 has launched a massive campaign aimed at assisting more than 1,000 employees from the King County Library System to form their own local union.

The campaign, started in January, is aimed at organizing the library system's employees, who include librarians, library assistants, pages, information technology workers, and clerical support staff. The employees work in 42 community libraries.

The campaign is being directed by an organizing committee of 46 King County Library System employees, supported by Council 2 Director of Organizing Bill Keenan and other Council 2 staff.

The committee meets collectively every two weeks to discuss the issues and progress of the campaign.

In addition, Council 2 has retained Susan Cole, who was involved in a previous organizing effort at the King County Library System. Cole is a former president of the Pierce County Library Union,



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## Session was most productive in years

The 2002 legislative session was more successful for Council 2 than many in recent years.

The success was largely a result of the one-vote Democratic majority in the State House of Representatives following the November elections.

A number of bills were passed and signed into law that were either drawn up or promoted by Council 2.

Among the major victories:

### • Bid limit bill

This legislation allows employees in City Public Works to perform more work before the remainder is shipped to outside contractors. The current limits of \$50,000 for first-class cities and \$30,000 for second-class cities were increased by 40 percent to \$70,000 and \$45,000. The new limits become effective June 14.

The new bill also contained a proviso to increase these new limits again in 2010

See SESSION, Page 2

# Those we elect should decide issues

Chris Dugovich

Everybody's in the Initiative business. Everybody seems to be getting into the initiative business and placing issues on the ballot these days, even the individuals who don't have to do so — the legislature. Although there have always been mechanisms for the state legislature to place issues before the voters the initiative process was really meant as a way for the less than powerful to let their voices be heard. The legislature doesn't have to do that; they can decide the issues all by themselves. Most issues have been and should be decided by those we elect, who have time to study them and make a learned decision. That's representative democracy, a system that has served this country very well for more than 200 years. I like the legislature — the way that ideas are brought forward in the form of bills, the committee review, the amendments and changes that occur throughout the process as more and more information is gathered and weighed until a good idea is passed into law. Bad ideas are sent packing. And, if by chance there's a partisan lean to the process — well, that's exactly what the system is designed to include.

## New phase

Now, however, we've entered a new phase where the perception is that in making a decision you may be held accountable. Therefore, let's punt and let the electorate make the decision at the ballot box. Don't get me wrong, they still make many decisions that affect our everyday lives, however a critical need to fix our transportation system will be left to 30-second commercial sound bites on the airwaves prior to the fall election. Our elected leaders in the meantime will stand back and merely state that the voters should have a say on the matter. Didn't we have our say when we elected them? While for better than two legislative sessions they've avoided dealing with our transportation issues the traffic continues to get worse and the economy of the state is negatively affected. Goods and services move slower and slower, commuter times continue to lengthen. Boeing talks of leaving the state of Washington and many others won't even consider relocating here in the Northwest. It's fairly clear now that I don't like the kind of initiative process that has really brought about the legislature's paralysis on the transportation issue. Their lack of decision-making ability is a knee-jerk reaction to the initiative process and rather than take it on and point out its weaknesses, they're playing the game. Why decide when you can place it on the ballot? Why not look to whom they can emulate? The initiative process has produced such dedicated citizen activists as the paid signature gatherer and the for-profit initiative czar and watch salesman, Tim Eyman. But now, because the legislature failed to do the job it was elected to do, the rest of us, however grudgingly, will need to take up the slack and do the right thing. The right thing means we need to pass the state transportation package so our state's economy and quality of life aren't downgraded any further — something the legislature should have done all by itself!



Letter from the president

# 60 members added in 4 counties

More than 60 new members have been added to the ranks of Council 2 since the start of the year. But another election has been delayed as a result of actions taken by the employer. Details: • On February 8, 20 members of the **Skagit County Prosecutor's staff and the Skagit County Public Defenders** office in Mount Vernon joined Council 2. A sufficient number of employees signed authorization cards to enable the union organization to take place without an election. Both groups are working with Staff Representative John Cole to put together contract proposals. • Some 70 percent of 24 para-transit drivers in **Lewis County Senior Transportation Division** in Chehalis who signed authorization cards to join Council 2 were certified by the Public Employment Re-

lations Commission May 21. The group will work with Staff Representative Dennis Bolton to prepare for contract negotiations. • On January 29 **Asotin County Development and Residential Services** in Clarkston — representing 20 County mental health care employees — received voluntary recognition from the County after more than 70 percent of the employees signed authorization cards. The County agreed to put them in the existing Local, 1476-AC. • Forty general government employees at the **Adams County Courthouse** filed a petition on December 28, 2001 to join Council 2. The petition was signed by 78 percent of the employees. But actions by the Adams County administration have caused a delay in the start of contract proposals. First, the County did not agree with a proposal that the bargaining

unit be treated as one unit and wanted to split it in three, with one unit for the courthouse, one for probation and one for E-911 and County jailers. The issue has been referred to a unit clarification hearing as Council 2 contends only the Public Employment Relations Commission can determine a bargaining unit's makeup. Second, the County Commissioners voted on April 1 to cut all the hours by those who signed the petition by 20 hours a month, which effectively is a 12.5 percent pay cut. Council 2 has filed unfair labor practices charges, claiming retaliation and discrimination. The union says the action violates the law requiring employers to maintain all wages and working conditions of employment during an election. Council 2 is working to get a date set for the hearing. The election process will be delayed pending resolution of the unfair labor practice charges.

## HERO, from Page 1

2's Spokane office. Frantz, 39, had been in a small interview cubicle at the base of the corrections building's mezzanine stairs when a 22-year-old woman ran up the stairs and climbed on the railing. Frantz ran out of the cubicle and ordered the woman to get off the railing. "I could tell by the look in her eyes that something was very wrong," Frantz says. She ignored him and climbed higher, reaching about 20 feet from the floor. As she poised to dive, Frantz recalled one inmate had died after jumping from the railing. Another was seriously hurt.

Realizing if he climbed the stairs he probably would not reach her in time, Frantz moved to where he calculated she would land should she jump. Within seconds, the woman, who weighs 135 pounds, dived backward, plunging into Frantz's outstretched arms. "I couldn't actually catch her, but I broke her fall," Frantz recalls. The woman suffered a cracked pelvis and was hospitalized overnight. Frantz suffered a small scratch on his nose, his teeth were numb, and he had a sore neck and shoulders. But he was back at work the next day. Frantz credits some of his ability to act as he did that day to being a member of Local 492. "Without a strong union such as the

one we belong to, a lot of the training sessions that are associated with taking action like this might not have been possible," he says. "Union requests of the administration to provide training and equipment enable us to do our job better," Frantz says. "Without that, I might not have been as well prepared to take the action I did." Smith, of Council 2, says Frantz's heroic act is an example of how Frantz's line of work is becoming increasingly dangerous due to the kind of prisoners that are being held in the corrections center. Among them are more mental-health patients. "It makes their jobs all the more dangerous and challenging," Smith says.

## SESSION, from Page 1

to \$90,000 and \$60,000. • **Retiree health-care coverage** This measure provides access to health-care coverage for local government retirees. The legislation, signed into law on April 2, is a significant step forward. Up to now local government had no obligations to provide ac-

cess to health benefits for employees who had spent a career in public service. Retirees had to go without coverage or face the high premiums the individual market offered. Gaining access was the first and most important step. Now it is up to each local government to design its own group plans. "As a result, we still have our work cut out for us to create the plans and propose the rates

for each city and county jurisdiction," says Pat Thompson, Council 2 Director of Legislation/Political Action. Most jurisdictions already have some system in place for retirees; those that do not will have to offer a plan. But there is no mandate on what the plan has to be and who pays for it. Such details will be the subject of negotiations between the union and the relevant city or county.

## CHESS, from Page 1

Attorneys. So Harty spoke with Darryl Robinson, a juvenile detention officer and member of Local 492J, who had taught the inmates how to play chess. He told Harty that they were trying to form a team to take part in tournaments, but did not have enough sets to do so. He said they would need 10 to 12 sets to enable most of them to play in the evenings and also to take part in tournaments. "The sets that were needed were

not inexpensive chess sets you can pick up at most stores, but special competition sets that have clocks to time the plays and so on," Harty says. Harty approached the Local 1553 executive board and suggested that they try to raise money for the sets. They raised \$500 as a Christmas project and bought 11 sets. When Harty delivered them, she took 10 dozen cookies baked by employees in the Prosecutors Family Law Office who are members of Local 1553 and 1553PA. "The kids were very

thankful as home-made things are a rarity for them," Harty says. The inmates were so grateful they drew a large "thank you" card, which they presented to the Local. "They tell me now how good they are all getting at chess," Harty says. "They are trying to teach me to play, too. But I am not doing very well." Harty recommends serving as a mentor to juvenile inmates as a "real eye opener to what our kids see as the world they live in." Call Council 2 offices in Spokane at 1-800-932-4850 for more information.

## CAMPAIGN, from Page 1

Local 3787, which is represented by Council 2. "The campaign is going extremely well," reports Keenan. "We have received a lot of support and a large number of authorization cards have been signed." The campaign's goal is to amass sufficient support from employees to enable a petition to be filed with the Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC) for the employees to be represented by Council 2. An unusual feature involves the way in which Council 2 representatives have worked with the employer. Three members of the organizing committee and two Council 2 staff members met with the director of the

King County Library System and told him up front that they would be launching the campaign. As a result of the discussions, the organizing committee and the Library Director signed a "fair campaign practices pledge" March 12. The pledge meant the system administration would allow employees to express their opinions openly and freely and discuss campaign issues during non-working time

in the library system. The pledge also means union supporters may have access to buildings and they will be free of any discipline or harassment or coercion in campaigning for representation by Council 2. Both sides agreed to present accurate information to employees. Keenan says the campaign organizers will continue with the card-signing process until they achieve their goal of petitioning PERC.

COUNCIL 2 EXECUTIVE BOARD		
<b>DISTRICT ONE</b> Lee Lehman, Roger Moller Greg Ahles, Gerri Delisle	<b>DISTRICT TWO</b> Diane Barden Prenguber Doug Peterson, Rich Needham	<b>DISTRICT THREE</b> Wayne Withrow Patti Cox
<b>DISTRICT FOUR</b> Kevin James, Pam Swenson	<b>DISTRICT FIVE</b> Tracy Arney, Ron Fredin	<b>DISTRICT SIX</b> Carol Travis, Yvette Lewis
<b>DISTRICT SEVEN</b> Chris Wood, Alpha O'Laughlin	<b>DISTRICT EIGHT</b> Brian Snipes, Ken Thomas, Art Krumm	<b>DISTRICT NINE</b> Paula Laws

# Members should take careful look at new retirement plan

Current PERS 2 members have the option of switching to a new retirement plan from September 1, 2002.

Called PERS 3, the new plan divides retirement benefits into two components. It is known as a "hybrid plan."

Members should take a careful look at the benefits and drawbacks of each plan before making their final decisions. The pros and cons are summarized in a table on this page.

When members retire under PERS 2

they are guaranteed 2 percent of their average final compensation for every year of service in the system. That benefit cannot change or be taken away. PERS 2 is a "defined benefit" that does not rely on the performance of stocks or bonds.

Under PERS 3 the guaranteed benefit is cut in half to 1 percent of Average Final Compensation (AFC) times years of service. An additional 1 percent is based on investment returns and is therefore at risk (even the principal amount). Plan 3

was developed at a time when the stock market was skyrocketing and many workers who relied on those enormous returns are now rethinking their retirement plans. The Legislature created this new option to relieve the State of its legal obligation to retirees. Under Plan 3, employees assume one half of the risks.

Much attention has been paid to the transfer payment offered to switch from Plan 2 to Plan 3. It is extremely important to remember that this is simply your

retirement money given back to you for giving up 1 percent of your guaranteed retirement benefit. It is not "new" money and should not be viewed as anything extra.

Council 2 has been working with the Department of Retirement Systems to develop educational materials and resources. They can be reached at 1-800-547-6657 or in Olympia at 360-664-7066. Their Web site address is: [www.wa.gov/drs](http://www.wa.gov/drs).

PERS 2		PERS 3	
PROS	CONS	PROS	CONS
A member of PERS 2 has a guaranteed defined benefit of 2% X years of service X Average Final Compensation.	A member of PERS 2 must work until age 65 to receive full benefits. <i>(Under the PERS 3 law, members who are 55 years old with 30 years of service can retire with an actuarial reduction of 3% each year.)</i>	PERS 3 provides more flexibility and portability to those who do not plan to stay in public service.	An employee in PERS 3 has a guaranteed defined benefit of only 1%.
PERS 2 is a no-risk plan. A member's benefit is not based on investments and is not subject to the fluctuations of the market.	For new local government employees hired on or after September 1, 2002, the choice between PERS 2 and PERS 3 must be made in 90 days and is irrevocable. If a decision is not made within the 90-day period, the employee automatically and irrevocably defaults to PERS 3 and can never be in PERS 2.	The 1% defined contribution portion of the PERS 3 entitlement can be withdrawn when the employee separates from public service. The other 1% stays in the system until the employee retires.	The 1% defined contribution portion can be withdrawn when the employee separates from public service. However, if the money is taken out as a cash payment, the employee is subject to tax liability as well as a penalty.
Employee contribution rates are based on how well the pension fund is doing. Rates are lower than in PERS 3. The current PERS II rate is less than 1% at 0.65%			The 1% defined contribution portion of PERS 3 makes the plan a higher risk. This is because the member's benefit is based on how well he or she invests and is subject to fluctuations in the market. <i>(If an employee retires when the markets are down, the benefit can be reduced to little or nothing.)</i>
Existing PERS 2 members who are considering transferring to PERS 3 have an open window period every January to do so. <i>(Members who are considering transferring to PERS 3 should take their time in making a decision. Once the decision is made to transfer, it is irrevocable.)</i>			The contribution rate is higher than PERS 2. The lowest rate is at least 5%; the highest possible rate is 8.5%. <i>(For older, higher-paid employees, this can be a good thing because they can afford to contribute more. For lower-paid employees, the returns will not be as good because they will contribute less.)</i>
PERS 2 provides a better benefit for those who are career public employees. <i>(Legislators, the state actuary and members of the Joint Committee On Pension Policy agree that if you stay in PERS 2 for 30 years, you will be better off financially in retirement than if you moved to PERS 3. In PERS 2, your annuity continues until you die. In PERS 3, your defined contribution portion is a time-limited annuity.)</i>			The amount of your contribution is determined by your age when you enter public service or transfer from PERS 2. <i>(The PERS 3 law offers three options for employee contribution rates. Members of all ages can choose to contribute the least amount, which is 5%. However, if you are under the age of 35 when you enter public service or when you transfer from PERS 2, the highest rate you can contribute is 6%. If you are age 35-44, the highest rate you can contribute is 7.5%. If you are age 45 or older, the highest rate you can contribute is 8.5%.)</i>
			After an employee chooses a contribution rate, it is irrevocable for the duration of employment. <i>(This could have a negative effect on an employee's benefit if they enter public service under the age of 35 at a lower-paid salary. The employee is penalized because the highest they can contribute is 6% for the duration of employment, regardless of change in age or salary.)</i>
			Within 90 days of the hire or transfer date, employees in PERS 3 must choose a contribution rate from the contribution structure outlined in the PERS 3 law. The first choice he or she makes is irrevocable. If members do not choose, they are defaulted to option "A" – which is a 5% contribution rate – of the contribution structure that is also irrevocable.

# Nail-biting finish to measure backed by Council 2

For several years, Council 2 staff had worked on the Pension Governance Bill. They fine-tuned it, lobbied members to support it, and received support for it from other unions.

After all, its passage was important to Council 2 members who would benefit from its provision to set up a Pension Board to design and monitor the pension system and set its own contribution rates. The board would hire its own actuary, too.

Finally, during the 2002 session, victory was in sight.

But it was not to be that easy. Several events turned the path toward passage into an obstacle-strewn one.

- First, the measure threatened to become a victim of the short session's cut-off date. That obstacle was overcome, however, when Council 2 — assisted by House Speaker Frank Chopp — succeeded in having the measure exempted.

The Appropriations and Rules committees each approved the measure in fast order and it was approved by the House in a 64-32 vote.

- Next, the bill looked certain to fall victim to the session's time limits.

With the clock ticking mercilessly on,

however, the Senate agreed to "catch it on the fly" — legislation jargon for pulling a bill straight to the floor for a vote. Only a few bills each session are treated this way, meaning it was a coup for Council 2 even to have its bill on the list.

Another obstacle had been overcome.

- Then came the Senate vote. Council 2's Director of Legislation/Political Action Pat Thompson waited anxiously, wondering whether sufficient votes could be mustered to approve the bill. His anxiety grew as a number of Democrats and Republicans suddenly switched their votes. Trying to keep track of all the switching was fruitless.

Then, on the last day of session, the Senate voted 25-23 to approve the measure. The constitutional majority for pass-

ing a Senate bill is 25, so there was no vote to spare.

Lawmakers and other lobbyists congratulated Thompson and Council 2 representatives. The victory over the final obstacle had been narrow, but it had been real. Or had it?

The celebration proved to be too early when Senator Shirley Winsley (R-Fircrest) — who had earlier supported the measure — moved to "reconsider" the bill shortly before the House adjourned.

"The apparent strategy was to hold our bill hostage, along with other House bills, to force the House to pass some Senate bills they wanted," Thompson says. "In short, our miraculous come-from-behind victory was the victim of end-game politics; 24 hours was too short to fix it."

But the biggest disappointment of the session had its good-news sides, too.

For one, the measure gained considerable support from influential lawmakers, including Speaker Frank Chopp and Rep. Bill Fromhold (D-Vancouver).

"Representative Fromhold deserves special thanks as he jumped into the fray and went way beyond the call of duty," says Thompson. "He joins long-time allies such as Mike Cooper (D-Edmonds) and Steve Conway (D-Tacoma) in fighting to improve our pension rights."

The good news, too, is that Council 2 has a lot of momentum to get the measure passed in the 2003 legislative session, when it will be joined by an initiative filed by the firefighters and police to create a governance board.

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## Kathleen Shelton retires

**K**athleen Shelton, who served as Staff Representative in Council 2's Olympia office for 21 years, retired at the end of February.

"She had a long and distinguished career with Council 2, which consisted of every facet of a staff representative position," says Chris Dugovich, Council 2 President and Executive Director. "She negotiated contracts, represented members and brought new members into the fold. We all wish her the best in her well-deserved retirement years."

Shelton became acquainted with the union after joining Thurston County as a real property appraiser in 1978 and soon worked her way up to president of Local 618.

In 1981 she was offered a full-time position for Council 2 As Staff Representative for all the locals in southwestern Washington, she represented 1,000 to 1,200 members.

"Over those years I probably bargained 150 to 200 different contracts and handled 10 times as many grievances," she says. She served as education director and conducted steward training across the state.

Shelton says people often ask what they receive from the union for the dues they pay. "I reply that this is job insurance, just as you have insurance for your home," she says. "I think Council 2 does a fantastic job of representing people. They have a professional staff and excellent leadership."

"Members should be proud of their union and what it has done for them and will do for them."

"I would like to say a heartfelt thank you to all the members who have stepped up to take leadership positions and performed so well as officers and stewards. You are the backbone of the union."

## New York women's convention leaves lasting impression on Council 2 delegates

**T**he AFSCME Women's Convention was scheduled to be held in Boston in November last year. But, in the wake of September 11, AFSCME president Gerald McEntee asked the Boston organizers for permission to move the meeting to New York City as a show of solidarity with the workers of the City.

As a result, the conference was held in downtown Manhattan. Among those who attended were a dozen members of Council 2.

"The theme of the conference was a tribute to those AFSCME workers involved in the September 11 tragedy and subsequent rescue effort," says Alpha O'Laughlin, who attended the convention.

Several presentations described the horror of the event and also the heroics of hundreds of public employees who saved countless lives.

One especially moving moment discussed the life and subsequent loss of Father Mychal Judge, an AFSCME member who died while administering last rites to a critically injured person.

Delegates visited Ground Zero where workers were still demolishing remnants of the buildings. On occasion, flames were erupting from the rubble. The odor was still intense.

"It was a really moving experience for all of us," recalls O'Laughlin.

About 2,000 delegates attended the conference.



New York firemen pose with Jacki Unger, Paula Laws, Alpha O'Laughlin and Chris Wood after Paula Laws had given them a check from Idaho Labor Council



Left: Among the delegates were Judy Johnson, Gloria Masters, Alpha O'Laughlin, Jaki Unger, Gerri Delisle, Chris Wood, Kathy Carpenter and Lois Clement

## LEGISLATIVE WEEKEND



## Members see legislative process up close

**I**t was almost as though the 90 Council 2 members who attended the Legislative Weekend in Olympia on March 8 and 9 became part of the legislative session itself.

"The members saw a lot of action,"

reports Pat Thompson, Council 2's Director of Legislation/Political Action. "Some of our bills were passed while they were there. As a result, they saw some of the fruits of their labor come to fruition."

During the weekend, State Represent-

tative Aaron Reardon (D-38th District) was a special guest at a Council 2 function. He received a warm welcome from attendees, who told him his support during the session for Council 2-supported measures was appreciated.

The Legislative Weekend is held every year. It provides Council 2 members the opportunity to see the legislative process in action, to meet representatives in person and to hear their views on the issues of the day.