

Challenging legislative session kicks off in Olympia

Posted On: Jan 10, 2011 (14:15:58)

On January 10, an extremely challenging 105-day legislative session began in Olympia. Your Local Union continues to fight hard to protect the interests of working families as the Washington State Legislature struggles to confront a \$5.6 billion deficit.

Your Union's Government Relations Coordinator Anna Jancewicz will be in Olympia every day throughout the session representing members of Teamsters Local 117, while Political Action Coordinator Lily Wilson-Codega will be busy mobilizing members from our Legislative and Political Action Committees to provide testimony, lobbying and support.

Your Union's top priorities for the session include fighting to reverse pieces of the across-the-board budget reductions that were imposed on State employees at the Department of Corrections (DOC) as well as protecting Teamsters at DOC from further cuts that jeopardize the safety of Correctional Employees and the public. We will also be working hard to stave off threats of further reductions in staffing and further facility closures at DOC.

In addition, your Union will be working to pass three important bills to protect Correctional Employees and their families:

1) Interest Arbitration Legislation for Correctional Employees - Interest arbitration allows a neutral arbitrator to settle a contract if the parties cannot reach an agreement in negotiations. County Correctional Employees, the Washington State Patrol, local police officers, firefighters and other critical law enforcement and public safety professionals have a statutory right to interest arbitration. It is time that our State's Correctional Employees are afforded this basic protection.

2) Mandatory Overtime Prohibition for Nurses – Nurses at DOC work in an extremely stressful environment of administering health care services to convicted felons. Currently, nurses in our State's prisons are frequently subjected to mandatory overtime. Fatigue created by long, grueling hours creates an unsafe working environment for nurses within our State's prisons. It's time we extend the current prohibition on mandatory overtime to State nurses.

3) Concealed Weapons for Off-Duty Correctional Employees – Correctional Employees in our State's prisons are often subjected to serious threats by convicted felons, who are later released into our communities. While off-duty, many DOC employees have been directly threatened and harassed by former inmates. Correctional Employees should have the same right as other law enforcement professionals to protect themselves and their families.

Your Union is developing a legislative SWAT team of members who will be available to testify on these and other bills at public hearings during session. If you are interested in joining this team, please contact Political Action Coordinator Lily Wilson-Codega at 206-441-4860 ext. 1258.

Get the latest Local 117 updates from Olympia on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/ibt117pac>.