



FORE TIMES

News for the Western Washington Taxicab Operators Association (WWTCOA) - Teamsters Local 117

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TAXI OPERATORS FLEX THEIR MUSCLE IN OLYMPIA

Over 50 taxi operators participate in Local 117's third lobby day



Teamsters taxicab operators at the 3rd Local 117 Lobby Day in Olympia on February 21.

The Western Washington Taxicab Operators Association (WWTCOA) showed its strength at the second Local 117 lobby day on February 21. Over 50 taxicab operators from all of the area's major taxi companies turned out to meet with legislators to discuss critical issues such as the sales tax regulations and the possibility of implementing a medallion system.

Working in teams of 8-12, WWTCOA members also educated legislators on two bills, one that seeks to protect taxi operators through greater enforcement of city regulations, and a second that would adjust the Labor and Industries rates currently paid by taxis.

L&I RATE HIKES HURTING TAXI DRIVERS

"The L&I rates are too high. We have to pay \$522 every three months and most of us don't even have health insurance," said Mohamed Salah, a 13-year driver with Yellow Airport.

Salah is an elected member of the WWTCOA Leadership Council. The Leadership Council has been working closely with Teamsters Local 117 to ease the regulatory burden in the industry and to improve working conditions for Puget Sound taxicab operators.

"We've been pushed to the edge and now we are lobbying with the Teamsters to get our rights back," said Parminder Cheema, a driver who has worked in the industry for 10 years.

The event was organized by Local 117's Legislative Affairs Department. Local 117's Political Action Coordinator Lily Wilson-Codega provided members with a short training prior to the visits, while intern Nathan Fitzgerald scheduled appointments with the legislators.

Taxicab operators were not alone in their efforts to educate legislators on issues they face at work. The WWTCOA members were joined by over twenty members of Teamsters Local 117 from other industries who promoted the two taxi bills as a part of a broader legislative agenda that was developed by the Union to support working families in the State of Washington.

Thank you to everyone who drove their cabs and helped transport other members to Olympia for Lobby Day! The next Lobby Day will take place on March 21. If you are interested in participating, please contact Dawn Gearhart 206-794-6678. ●

Come to Olympia! Legislators to discuss L&I Rates on March 6



The attendance of over 50 taxi drivers at the February 21 Local 117 Lobby Day is already starting to yield results. Thanks to the large turnout, legislators have scheduled a work session on Wednesday, March 6 at 8 a.m. to discuss L&I rates for taxicab operators.

Topics for discussion include:

- *The history of HB1367 (the bill that required taxis to pay L&I insurance);*
- *How taxis were classified at their current rate;*
- *Whether taxis are misclassified under the current system.*

The March 6 session will have a big impact on whether legislators consider any future bills involving L&I rates for taxi operators. Although the session is not open to public comment, it is important to have a strong showing of WWTCOA members in attendance.

If you are able to attend, please contact Dawn Gearhart at 206-794-6678. ●

VICTORY FOR TAXIS AT THE PAN PACIFIC HOTEL!

Threat of legal action compels hotel to enforce city regulations

The Pan Pacific Hotel has long been a headache for hardworking taxicab operators trying to earn a living for themselves and their families. The hotel has assigned too few parking slots for taxis and has failed to enforce city regulations that oversee access to the hotel.

As a result, taxi operators in the City of Seattle are losing fares.

But thanks to a settlement agreement achieved by Teamster Local 117's Legal Department, big changes are coming to the Pan Pacific that will benefit taxis.

The Hotel has agreed to the following:

- *Designate four new taxi-only spots in the lot;*
- *Require that parking and hotel staff attend a training on regulations in the industry;*
- *Suspend staff who fail to abide by city regulations;*
- *Turn away vehicles that fail to adhere to city laws and regulations;*
- *Monitor the parking lot every hour instead of every two hours;*
- *Partner with Standard Parking management to continue to address the issue and work with their staff members;*
- *Commit to support the WWTCOA;*
- *Write a letter to the city to express their concern over the lack of enforcement.*

These changes are possible as a result of negotiations conducted by Local 117 General Counsel Spencer Thal on behalf of the WWTCOA. Thal, the union's top attorney, threatened to take legal action if hotel management refused to address problems affecting taxis at the Pan Pacific.

The Pan Pacific ultimately agreed to meet with Thal, Dawn Gearhart, and members of the WWTCOA Leadership Council to discuss how to resolve the issues.

This settlement represents a significant victory that would not have been possible without taxi operators getting organized and fighting together with their Union! ●



MEMBERSHIP NOTES:

- ID cards are currently being distributed to WWTCOA members at the Orange Cab office, the Airport, and downtown taxi stands to dues-paying members.
- Medical Discount Cards are now available for discounts at pharmacies, doctors offices, dentist offices and vision care for members and their families.
- To become a member or update your membership information, visit the Teamsters Local 117 office at 14675 Interurban Ave. S. If you have questions, contact Dawn at 206-794-6678.

EVENTS

March 5 - WWTCOA Leadership Council meeting at 4:30 p.m.

March 5 - Taxi Advisory Commission meeting at 9 a.m.

March 6 - Labor & Industries work session in Olympia at 8 a.m.

March 21 - Local 117 Lobby Day