



Members of TEAMSTERS LOCAL 117

# The Guardian

News from the hardworking men and women of DOC

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## BARGAINING COMMITTEE MAKES DEMANDS CLEAR

*Negotiations over your 2013-2015 Labor Agreement*



*Your Local Union's Bargaining Committee for Teamsters at the Department of Corrections.*

"Our goals in bargaining are pretty clear," said Correctional Sergeant Eric Smith, a 16-year DOC employee with the Washington Corrections Center in Shelton.

"We're trying to expand our rights and protections - bidding rights, vacation rights, layoffs and transfer rights," he said, during a team caucus at a bargaining session on July 10. "But staff safety is still our number one priority."

The July 10 meeting was the sixth of eight occasions Smith and his fellow bargaining committee members have met with the State so far, and discussions have yet to delve into economics - those

talks will come in September.

But even with economics still on the horizon, negotiations have been a challenge, and at times a frustration.

### **BARGAINING COMMITTEE PROPOSES SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS**

Smith said he was particularly concerned about the State's lack of urgency around the Union's proposals designed to improve safety conditions for staff.

"They're not showing us that they give a damn," he said.

When asked to elaborate, Smith was clear:

## MCC MEMBERS CALL ON ELECTED OFFICIALS TO DO MORE

*Snohomish County Political Forum*

Where do your elected officials stand on critical issues?

Do they support interest arbitration rights for you and your co-workers? Are they in favor of making health care more affordable for you and your family? Will they defend your collective bargaining rights should they come under attack?

If you don't know the answer to these basic questions, it's time to start paying attention and getting involved.

"We need to know where these candidates stand on issues like staff safety, public safety, and whether they support working men and women," said Sgt. Brad Waddell of MCC. "Change will not come unless we educate our representatives and advocate for the right policies."

Waddell, along with Local 117's legislative affairs duo of Teresita Torres and Lily Wilson-Codega, helped organize a recent candidates' forum for DOC Teamsters in Snohomish County designed to do just that.

Held at an elementary school auditorium in Monroe on Tuesday, July 31, the event drew dozens of correctional workers who showed up to listen to an impressive array of candidates.

### **12 ELECTED OFFICIALS AND CANDIDATES IN ATTENDANCE**

Eight State Representatives were on hand, two State Senators, a City Mayor, and one of the leading candidates for a seat in the United States Congress.

## BARGAINING

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"They're not the ones who have to walk the tiers or provide the medical or dental treatment or sit one-on-one with these inmates in an office. That makes it easy for them to balk at our proposals," he said.

Smith would know something about the dangers of working inside a prison. Earlier in his career, he was nearly killed when an offender tried to jam a glass TV tube in his neck.

"Too many of us have been hurt," he said. "I just want my people to go home at the end of the day."

### OUR NUMBER ONE PRIORITY

Staff safety continues to be your Local Union's priority not just in negotiations but for the upcoming political and legislative seasons as well.

"We will be relentless in our efforts to improve staff safety at the bargaining table and in working with the State Legislature," said Tracey A. Thompson, Secretary-Treasurer of Teamsters Local 117 and your Union's lead negotiator.

In addition to Thompson, acting Director of Corrections Michelle Woodrow and Eastside Coordinator Joe Kuhn are involved in bargaining as backup leads. All Local Union Business Representatives are at the table as well as the following rank-and-file members:

- Jessica Anderson, AA3 CCCC
- Terry Hutchins, RN MCC
- Gar Rodside, Const. Maint. Sup. MCCCW
- Terry Paolino, SGT WSP
- Marina House, CO2 WSP
- Ronny Matsen, SGT SCCC
- Shawn Piliponis, CC2 LCC
- Pam Olekas, Corr. Records Sup. OCC
- Nicholas DeBusk, CO2 AHCC
- Darrin Norton, CO2 MCC
- Derek Kennedy, CO2 WCC
- Tara Proctor, AA2 CRCC
- Nancy Manlapid, RN3 WCCW
- Eric Smith, SGT (Transport) WCC
- Greg Olekas, CO2 CBCC
- Dennis Simons, SGT WCCW

In all, your Union team has met with the State six times, on June 4, 5, 18 & 19, July 9 & 10, and August 1 & 2. In the last session, the parties exchanged their final, non-economic language proposals. Bargaining is also scheduled for September 13, 14, 26 & 27.

**If you have questions about contract negotiations, talk to your bargaining committee member or your Business Representative. Look for updates on the DOC News Ticker of your Local Union's website at [www.teamsters117.org](http://www.teamsters117.org).**

## POLITICAL FORUM

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*Sgt. Brad Waddell questions candidates during a "lightning round" at the Snohomish County Political Forum on July 31.*

Michelle Woodrow, Local 117's new Acting Director of Corrections and Law Enforcement, moderated the forum, which kicked off with a "lightning round" of yes/no questions presented to the candidates by Sgt. Waddell.

Had the candidates ever been a Union member? Waddell asked. Would they stand with correctional employees in an informational picket? Would they work in a prison at age 65 having to fight with offenders in their 20s? Would they support legislation allowing Correctional Officers and Sergeants with 25 years or more of State service to retire at age 55 the same as the State Patrol?

The warm-up questions helped pave the way for a deeper discussion of the issues.

RN Terry Hutchins asked the candidates for their position on revenue and the impacts on the DOC; Sgt. Michael Boe questioned the candidates on collective bargaining rights; while Officer Tami Mac Avoy asked about custody overrides and early release.

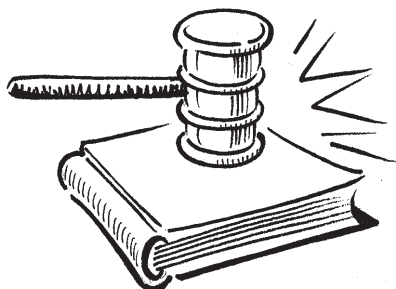
### INTEREST ARBITRATION: WHERE DO YOU STAND?

"We are an important part of the criminal justice system but we are treated like second-class citizens," said Sgt. Carl Beatty, as he led off a question about interest arbitration. "My employer puts more effort in the offenders we care for than the staff that keeps our communities safe."

In the end, ten candidates pledged to support interest arbitration rights for correctional employees in the coming legislative session.

Woodrow concluded the event by thanking the candidates and recognizing Sgt. Waddell for his hard work in planning the event and the many off-shift hours he spent walking the tiers at MCC to recruit his co-workers.

**The Snohomish County political forum was one of many such events organized by Teamsters Local 117 prior to the 2012 election. Political forums have also taken place in King and Pierce counties. For more information, visit your Local Union's website at [www.teamsters117.org](http://www.teamsters117.org).**



# 117 LEGAL DEPARTMENT ON A ROLL

## *4 Recent Arbitration Wins Keep the Department on its Toes*

**T**here has been a lot of good news out of the Local 117 Legal Department these days. Four recent arbitration wins have positively impacted the lives of correctional employees and their families. In the past few months alone, an Officer unjustly removed from his bid post was returned to a similar position; a Sergeant was

reinstated to his rank after a demotion; members gained greater control of their personal holidays; and hundreds of DOC families were fully reimbursed for economic losses due to the State's inept handling of furlough.

If the Department wasn't already keenly aware, this string of losses should come as a wake-up call - abide by your contractual obligations and treat your employees with respect or else bear the wrath of the Local 117 legal team.

**1. ACHIEVING VICTORY IN FURLOUGH CASE:** For two years, Local 117 members waited patiently for an outcome in the furlough case. Finally, they have some money in their pockets.

Arbitrator Anthony Vivenzio's decision directing the DOC to make whole all members impacted under Furlough I (ESSB 6503) "for any economic losses, including lost wages and interest thereupon at the rate of 12% per annum" was a long time in the coming, but the result is sweet.

Under the award, all members impacted under ESSB 6503 were made whole for eight days.

The arbitrator's decision represents a complete victory for Local 117 members whose contract was violated when the State implemented ESSB 6503. It demonstrates the strength of your contract with respect to your seniority rights as union members.

Other unions, including WFSE and SEIU fought the furlough, but only Local 117 was able to achieve an arbitrator's make-whole ruling in its members' favor.

The money from furlough was not insignificant - over \$1 million for 800 correctional employees. It helped many members and their families through rough patches. *In one case, it helped a grateful member from WCCCW update her household appliances with a new washer, dryer, and stove!*



Fearsome Local 117 Senior Attorney  
Dan Swedlow

**2. GAINING GREATER CONTROL OF PERSONAL HOLIDAYS:** A major source of frustration for correctional employees has been the DOC's practice of denying personal holiday requests. When life presents responsibilities beyond work, whether it is a wedding to attend, a parent/teacher conference at your kid's school, or a trip to the DMV, no one wants to be rebuffed.

Thankfully, members' requests will be granted more frequently now after an arbitrator's decision prohibiting the Department from denying personal holiday requests under the pretext that "relief is unavailable."

In his August 1 award, arbitrator James Lundberg stated that "the Department is in violation of the collective bargaining agreement when it denies a Personal Holiday to employees without meeting the mandate of Section 20.4 of the collective bargaining agreement." Lundberg also ruled that the Department "may not deny requests for Personal Holidays" under such circumstances in the future.

In response to the Union's win, Local 117 Secretary-Treasurer Tracey A. Thompson had this to say: "The arbitrator's decision demonstrates the strength of your collective bargaining agreement and the protections that it provides. It also shows that your Union will fight vigorously to enforce your contract and defend your rights when they are violated."

**3. SERGEANT REINSTATED TO HIS RANK:** In May, your Local Union helped achieve an arbitrator's ruling that reinstated a Correctional Sergeant at CRCC to his rank after he had been unjustly demoted as a result of a cell extraction incident.

**4. OFFICER RETURNED TO SIMILAR POST:** In June, Local 117's legal team won an arbitration award that returned a Correctional Officer to a similar position after he had been unfairly removed from his bid post due to "operational need."



**IN OUR VIEW** (published in the *Seattle Times* on May 2, 2012)

## The **MYTH** of the Overcompensated Public Employee

### *Letter to the Editors of the Seattle Times*

**O**n April 29, 2012, the *Seattle Times* published yet another editorial with calls for more cuts to State employees, which would result in continuing to balance the budget on the backs of working families.

The premise of the piece was that State workers have not sacrificed enough in a struggling economy as compared with workers in the private sector.

In response, Local 117 Secretary-Treasurer Tracey A. Thompson published the following letter in the newspaper refuting their argument:

#### **Misrepresented reality**

*The editorial "State employee contracts must reflect reset economy," [Opinion, April 29] completely misrepresents the reality of state employee compensation.*

*The compensation starting point for most state employees is significantly lower than for their private-sector counterparts. Some state employees earn as much as 40 percent less than those performing comparable work in the private sector.*

*In six out of the past 10 years, state employees have either received no general wage increase or have had their wages reduced through legislatively imposed furloughs and across-the board reductions. Over this same 10-year period, the cost of living has increased by an annual average of more than 2.4 percent.*

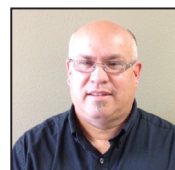
*Many state employees already earn poverty wages and are eligible for food stamps and state-subsidized health care. Further eroding state employee compensation will only expedite the exodus of qualified, skilled workers from state employment, which in turn will result in reduced revenues.*

*Rather than undermining state employee collective-bargaining rights, the Legislature should do some hard bargaining to close tax loopholes that cost the state billions of dollars in revenue. Or maybe a total overhaul of our tax system. That hasn't been done since the Great Depression.*

— Tracey A. Thompson  
Teamsters Local 117

## LOCAL 117 WELCOMES NEW DOC BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVE

### *Local 117 hires Greg McCombs*



Greg McCombs

**E**ffective July 1, Greg McCombs is your new Teamsters Local 117 Business Representative for members at WSP.

McCombs brings 15 years of experience to the position. He began his Corrections' career at the Coyote Ridge Corrections Center (CRCC) in 1997 and became a Correctional Sergeant at the prison in 2003.

McCombs has been a Shop Steward since 2007, and he has served on the Union bargaining team in contract negotiations. In 2012, he was recognized with the Shop Steward of the Year Award for his outstanding leadership skills.

McCombs is active in his community. He has been a volunteer Fire Fighter, a Scoutmaster with the Boy Scouts, and a Sunday School teacher.

In talking about his new position with the Union, McCombs says:

*"I will work hard to represent the members and make sure that management is following the contract. I know what it is like to be in the trenches and am ready for this challenge."*

**Please join your Local 117 Brothers and Sisters in welcoming new Teamsters Business Representative, Greg McCombs.**

## BARGAINING OVER UNIFORMS IS UNDERWAY



Poor quality stitching no more?

**I**n May, your Local Union began negotiations to address the impact of House Bill 2346, the uniform bill that dictates that offenders can no longer "make or assemble" uniforms worn by Correctional Officers.

So far, your Union bargaining committee has met with the State three times. In those meetings, we have communicated your input and concerns that were collected prior to bargaining.

We ask that you be patient during this process. There a number of factors that must be addressed in negotiations. Being a State agency, the DOC must also comply with procurement rules on purchasing materials under a contract and that process takes time.

The next bargaining date is scheduled for Monday, August 13. Please stand by for updates on your Union's website at [www.teamsters117.org](http://www.teamsters117.org) as we bargain over the impacts of this important bill.