



Puget Sound Taxi Driver FORE TIMES

April 2014

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

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A WIN FOR ALL DRIVERS

City Council acts to regulate TNCs with one-year pilot program



WWTCOA member Jagit Singh speaks to the media on March 17.

After two years of intense debate, drivers on all sides of Seattle's personal transportation industry won an important victory that regulates Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), such as Uber and Lyft, and limits their ability to operate illegally in the city.

Taxicab operators achieved this victory because they got organized, participated in the political process, and worked in partnership with their union, the Teamsters.

A TWO-YEAR FIGHT FOR RESPECT

They attended and testified at hearings, met with the city council, signed petitions, lobbied their legislators, made phone calls, sent emails, spoke out in the media, and rallied on the steps of city hall.

Taxi drivers teamed up with for-hire drivers and TNC drivers to form a powerful alliance that challenged the TNCs.

"Since we got the Teamsters, we've been able to get in the door in Olympia and at the city. The Union makes us strong, and the stronger we become, the more effective we will be," said Mike Magenta, a member of the leadership council of the Western Washington Taxicab Operators

Association (WWTCOA).

"It's important for us to be organized. When we stand together, we are more powerful," said Alpha Diallo, a driver with Yellow Airport.

Getting organized was the key to our success. Drivers spoke with one voice and the city council listened.

Despite intense pressure and the vast financial resources of the

TNCs, Seattle became the first city in the country to put limits on the TNCs. No more than 150 drivers per company will be permitted on the road at any one time.

We were also successful in strengthening safety regulations, adding more taxi licenses, providing some relief for wheelchair drivers, and making insurance more accessible for all drivers.

But there is still a long way to go. TNC companies have been given increased leverage over the TNC drivers who are already at an extreme disadvantage. The TNCs are also considering running a voter initiative to try to roll back the ruling by the city council. With outside funding from Wall Street and Silicon Valley, it is clear that these corporations do not have our community's best interests at heart.

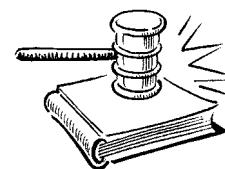
GET ORGANIZED - JOIN THE WWTCOA!

The best way to curtail the influence of the TNCs and to protect the livelihood of all drivers in the industry is for more of us to join the WWTCOA.

To join, visit www.teamstertaxi.org or talk to Dawn Gearhart at 206-441-4860 ext. 1254. ●

WWTCOA SUES UBER FOR BREAKING THE LAW

Complaint cites numerous violations



Taxicab operators, with the help of the Teamsters 117 legal department, filed a lawsuit in

King County Superior Court on March 24, alleging that Uber is in violation of city, county, and state laws and regulations that govern our region's personal transportation industry.

UBER NOT PLAYING BY THE RULES

"Uber is not playing by the rules like the rest of us are, and local, small business owners like myself and our families are suffering as a result," said Parminder Cheema, an elected member of the WWTCOA's leadership council. "The community is at risk as well. If things don't change, somebody might get hurt."

According to the complaint, Uber is engaging in "an unlawful and deceptive business practice which harms the economic interests of taxicab drivers." Uber drivers are not subjected to the same safeguards, requirements, and penalties, the complaint alleges.

"It's hard enough to run your own taxi business when the city and the county nickel and dime us every step of the way. Now you have Uber coming in from out-of-state. They're funded by Silicon Valley and Wall Street, so they've got the resources, but they're refusing to pay the price for doing business, and they're refusing to follow the rules. It's bad for our community, and it's not safe," Cheema said.

The complaint can be viewed on the WWTCOA website at www.teamstertaxi.org. ●

Not a WWTCOA Member? Join Now!



Mike Magenta
Cab #179



Alpha Diallo
Cab #282



Amadeep Singh
Cab #168



Gurdeep Singh
Cab #831



Daljinder Singh
Cab #697



Getachew Mebrathu
Cab #654

"Since we got the Teamsters, we've been able to get in the door in Olympia and at the City. The Union makes us strong, and the stronger we become, the more effective we will be."

"It's important for us to be organized because when we stand together, we are more powerful. Getting organized helps us to be strong and be successful."

"When we are organized, we can fight with the city and whoever else is affecting our business. There are a lot of other companies coming here with a lot of resources. If we want to survive we need to fight back."

"The city and the companies are not listening. That's why we have to get together. If they understand our problems, they will be willing to help us. Our problems cannot be solved by just one guy."

"With Teamsters 117 we have changed lots of laws in the city and are getting things done. If everyone joins the union we can go further together."

"We can do anything together."



Teamster Business Representative Dawn Gearhart visits the taxi lot on March 21.

INSURANCE RATING CHANGES FOR TAXIS

More competition means lower rates

One of the most important changes in the legislation recently approved by the Seattle City Council is the lowering of the insurance rating for taxis.

A lower rating will open the door for more carriers to enter the market and increase competition. This is good news because it will likely result in a decrease to your insurance premiums.

The City Council will convene a special committee on insurance to gather data so that the new program can be put into place.

Stay tuned for more information on this exciting development! ●

SENATE LEADERSHIP BLOCKS L&I BILL

Our fight on L&I will continue next year

Despite strong bipartisan support in the House of Representatives, our L&I bill (HB 2152) did not move forward this legislative session because of political gamesmanship in the Senate. In the end, key Senate Republicans dug in their heels and refused to support any legislation that would provide relief for working families.

We should not view our work on the bill as a defeat, however. It is not unusual for a bill to stall out the first time around, and although we were ultimately unable to pass the bill, we came a long way. The bill passed out of the House 93-1 and it survived until the last day of session, thanks to your support. Taxicab operators made phone calls, sent emails, lobbied their legislators, and testified in hearings.

To pass the bill, it will take that kind of effort again next legislative session, which begins in January 2015. In the meantime, we will be setting up appointments with key legislators to continue to educate them about the need to provide taxicab operators the freedom to choose whether or not to participate in the State's L&I program. ●



Getting organized is key to our success. The more WWTCOA members we have, the stronger we are!

Summary of the New City Regulations

On March 17, the Seattle City Council approved a one-year pilot program that governs the city's taxi industry. The new program does the following:

- Limits each TNC to 150 drivers on the road at any given time;
- Requires TNC drivers to comply with commercial insurance regulations;
- Adds 100 taxi licenses each year for the next two years;
- Allows for-hire drivers to pick up street hails but not passengers from taxi stands;
- Prevents TNCs from creating shadow companies like Uber Y and Uber Z;
- Allows the city to lift the cap on TNCs after one year.

