



TEAMSTERS LOCAL 117

# The Guardian

News from the hardworking men and women of DOC

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## FULL-SCALE PERFORMANCE AUDIT UNDERWAY AT DOC

*State Auditor's Office says that no stone will go unturned at DOC*



In 2013, a group of CRCC custody staff met with Rep. **Joe Schmick (9th Leg. District)** to talk about issues in the prisons, particularly the lack of sufficient boots on the ground to ensure a safe working environment. Rep. Schmick heard their concerns and introduced a bill (HB 2421) this legislative session designed to do something that hadn't been done in a very long time - fund a study of DOC

staffing levels.

Despite many phone calls and emails from members in support of the bill, legislators ultimately pulled HB 2421 from executive session, which prevented the bill from moving forward. As it turns out, lawmakers had good reason for pulling the bill.

### DOC PERFORMANCE AUDIT IS NOW UNDERWAY

According to legislators on the House Public Safety Committee, the bill was pulled because a comprehensive performance audit of the DOC, which had been on hold due to pending

litigation, is now underway.

A performance audit of the Department will go much further than Representative Schmick's proposed bill. It will take an independent, rigorous look, not only at DOC staffing levels, but at all aspects of DOC operations. The Department will be held accountable to the Legislature and the Governor for any improper activity, safety and security hazards, or lack of effectiveness. The State Auditor, Troy Kelley, has assured us that no stone will go unturned.

A full-scale audit of the DOC is long overdue. It will help provide lawmakers with objective evidence of problem areas and it will make concrete recommendations about how to resolve them.

*Your willingness to speak out about staffing levels and other safety-related issues helped make this possible. ●*

## CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS SET TO BEGIN IN APRIL

*DOC Stewards will be meeting on March 21 to review survey results*

Thanks to the amazing work of our **DOC Shop Stewards** across the state, we were able to achieve record returns on contract surveys for the upcoming negotiations over your 2015-2017 collective bargaining agreement.

More surveys means that more DOC Teamsters have voiced their concerns and prioritized issues that are important to all of us. The surveys also allowed members to include written comments about compensation, overtime provisions, bidding rights, seniority, and other issues.

With this information, along with the

input gathered from discussions at demands meetings, your bargaining committee can develop concrete proposals to present in negotiations.

### PREPARING FOR INTEREST ARBITRATION

Your input is especially important in these negotiations because our newly-won interest arbitration rights will allow us to make a case for our proposals before a neutral third-party arbitrator should we reach impasse with the state over mandatory subjects of bargaining.

The other important work we are doing

to prepare for upcoming negotiations is to analyze job classifications and determine market-based comparables so that we can make persuasive arguments with respect to compensation before the arbitrator.

On March 21, we will be meeting with all DOC Shop Stewards statewide to examine the survey results so that we can continue to develop our proposals.

In the meantime, if you have any questions about the process, please talk to your Business Representative. Together, with your participation, we can achieve a fair contract for all DOC Teamsters.

*Contract negotiations are scheduled to begin on April 22, 2014. ●*

## A message from your Director of Corrections



Michelle Woodrow

### MEMBERS GETTING INVOLVED

Brothers and Sisters:

Over the last several months, we have seen some exciting developments for Teamsters at the DOC:

- Funding was secured in the State's supplemental budget to open the new medium unit at the Washington State Penitentiary;
- The State Auditor's office announced that it would be conducting a full-scale performance audit of the DOC that will examine staffing levels and other issues;
- Rep. Mike Sells urged the Attorney General's office to provide an opinion regarding supplemental pension that could positively impact DOC members' retirement security;
- Teamsters 117 members testified in numerous hearings in Olympia in support of bills that impact DOC families;
- DOC Shop Stewards achieved record returns on contract surveys for upcoming negotiations.

None of this would have been possible without members getting involved in their Union. In each case, members made phone calls to legislators, met with their representatives in district and in Olympia, spoke out in legislative hearings, and ensured that contract surveys were completed and returned.

**Member involvement is key to our success. If members do not get involved, our power as a Union is limited.**

This April, we will begin contract negotiations with the State over your 2015-2017 collective bargaining agreement. Our new interest arbitration rights will provide us with the best opportunity in years to make strides in our contract.

But interest arbitration is limited to the term of the contract. To achieve long-term interest arbitration rights, all 6,000 of us will need to work together. That means talking to your legislators, participating in our political action committees, coming to Olympia for lobby day, and standing together on the steps of the State Capitol, demanding respect. If all of us are willing to get involved, we will win interest arbitration. In fact, there is nothing that we can't achieve.

Thank you for your service, and remember to be safe.

In Solidarity,

Michelle Woodrow

Director of Corrections & Law Enforcement

## FUNDING FOR NEW WSP UNITS INCLUDED IN SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET

**New Williams unit at WSP slated to open after updates**

**A**t the end of February, the House and Senate released their **supplemental budget proposals**, and there



Washington State Penitentiary

was some good news for Teamsters at the

DOC. Both the House and Senate had joined Governor Inslee in calling for \$5 million in funding for the opening of a 256-bed medium security unit at WSP in Walla Walla to reduce prison overcrowding.

Overcrowding, particularly at the Washington Corrections Center in Shelton, has led to serious safety and security issues for correctional employees, with offenders packed into cells and in some cases having to sleep on the floor.

So the proposals to open the new unit are a welcomed relief.

With the three governmental entities on board with the DOC funding, the only question remaining was whether the legislature would be able to hammer out a deal and pass a final supplemental budget. By the end of session, that question was answered, and a budget deal was struck.

Local 117 members across our Union worked hard to educate legislators about the need to include the funding in their proposals, both on our Teamster lobby days on January 28 and February 20, and through our many emails and phone calls.

"We told them how important it was to open the Williams unit at the Penitentiary, and they heard us," said Teresa Bennett, a WSP Pharmacy Tech, who attended lobby day on January 28.

Your Union's Legislative Affairs Coordinator, Teresita Torres, also met with legislators throughout session to discuss the importance of appropriating the funding for the DOC.

As far as the capital budget goes, the proposal to allocate \$1.8 million to complete pre-design studies on capacity issues for male and female prison populations remains unresolved. The Governor and the House included the funding in their proposals, while the Senate did not.

# TEAMSTERS VOICE THEIR CONCERNS IN OLYMPIA

*DOC Stewards meet with their representatives to discuss conditions in our State's prisons*



*Teamsters Lobby Day - 2014*

**M**embers of Teamsters 117 from all corners of Washington State, including dozens of DOC Shop Stewards, converged on Olympia on January 28 for the first Local 117 lobby day of the 2014 legislative session.

Members came from as far as Spokane, Walla Walla, the Tri-Cities, Clallam Bay, Aberdeen, Monroe, Vancouver and many other locations to speak with their

legislators about critical issues facing Teamster families.

Correctional employees teamed up with taxicab operators, warehouse workers, nurses, and county and city employees for dozens of meetings with legislators.

Some of the issues that Local 117 members brought to their representatives included:

- *Passing a bill (HB 1923) that would allow DOC medical staff the right to participate in the PSERS retirement program;*
- *Preventing prison overcrowding by ensuring that funds are appropriated to open a 256-bed medium security unit at the Washington State Penitentiary in Walla Walla;*
- *Passing a bill (HB 2152) that would*

*give taxicab operators the choice to opt into the State's Labor & Industries program;*

- *Passing a statewide paid sick leave bill (HB 1313);*
- *Protecting our state's workers' compensation program.*

"My most important issue is staff safety," said Stevie Fonseca, who works at the Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW). "I'm a Teamster and I want legislators to know that we have a vote. When we show them that our vote matters, they will lend us their ear."

"We are all members of the Teamsters," said Mohinder Gill, a taxicab operator with the Western Washington Taxi Cab Operators Association. "That's what makes us strong."

***Thank you to all of the DOC members who took time out of their busy schedules to make their voices heard. You make all Teamsters proud! ●***

## DOC SPEAKS OUT: Reflections on Lobby Day

*"I see the fiber of state employees slowly eroding away. If I don't take the action myself how can I expect other people to? I'm doing what I can to support the DOC family. We are the ones who make the prisons go. We're keeping the public safe."*

- Thomas Orth, AHCC Sergeant

*"The more we call and visit our legislators, the more minds we can change. The people in Olympia don't work in this environment. They need to hear about it."*

- Steven Worden, WSP CO

*"Legislators need to hear from the sergeants and the officers who do the work. We are the union. Teamsters 117 is our avenue for that, but if we don't make our voices heard, they won't get the message."*

- James Palmer, MCC Sergeant

*"My most important issue is staff safety. I'm a Teamster and I want to let legislators know that we have a vote. When we show them that our vote matters, they will lend us their ear."*

- Stevie Fonseca - WCCW Classification Counselor



*DOC Teamsters Lobby Day - 2014*

*"Being part of the Teamsters is a good feeling. It's very uplifting for me. I feel like together we can accomplish a lot if we get involved."*

- Teresa Bennett, WSP Pharmacy Tech

*"We've all got ideas, we've all got opinions, we've all got answers, we've all got solutions, but if we don't voice them, nobody is going to hear us."*

- Chris Hallgren, MCC CO

*"You don't realize the impact you make until you've been there. Legislators will listen to you. What you have to say does mean something to them."*

- Ronny Matsen, SCCC Sergeant

*"A lot of people think that nothing's happening. People want raises, they want better retirement. Now we've got interest arbitration. If we get something in this next contract, peoples' eyes will open and I think more people will get involved."*

- Kellon Cunningham, CRCC CO2



## REP. MIKE SELLS SEEKS CLARITY FROM AG REGARDING PENSION

Pushing for a stronger retirement



Rep. Mike Sells

**R**epresentative Mike Sells of the 38th Legislative District has sent a letter to Attorney General Bob Ferguson requesting a legal opinion

regarding supplemental pension options for state employees that exist outside of the state's plans.

The letter is similar to one that the Teamsters 117 Legal Department sent to Ferguson after he was elected in 2012.

An opinion by the AG's office would determine whether or not we are permitted under current state law to negotiate the Teamsters pension into the DOC contract as an option that can be voted on by the membership.

In past bargaining, we have discussed the issue, but the State has maintained that

current statute does not permit it.

An opinion from the AG's office would clarify the way forward: It would help determine if supplemental pension is a permissive subject of bargaining under current law. If it is not, we would need to work toward a change in the statute.

The Teamsters pension as a supplemental option would provide Local 117 members at the DOC with a greater degree of retirement security.

The **Western Conference of Teamsters Pension Trust** fund is the largest area-wide multi-employer pension plan in the United States. It covers 200,000 active participants through pension agreements negotiated by local unions with more than 1,600 employers predominantly in 13 Western states. The Trust is in excellent condition and is well-funded. Thousands of retirees depend on the Teamsters pension for a stable income in their retirement years.

In January 2012, workers at the City of Kent voted to add the Teamsters pension. Workers in the City of Tacoma, King County, and the City of Pacific have followed suit.

Any supplemental pension proposal would have to be voted on and approved by the membership. ●

## MCC SERGEANT TESTIFIES IN SUPPORT OF SB 6566

Sgt. Boe speaks out after moratorium



Sgt. Michael Boe

**O**n February 26, Local 117 member, **Sergeant Michael Boe** of the Monroe Correctional Complex, was in

Olympia to testify in support of Senate Bill 6566, a proposed law that affirms the authority of the clemency and pardons board to make recommendations to the governor regarding petitions for reprieve to ensure that law enforcement and others are heard.

Sergeant Boe was speaking on behalf of many of his fellow co-workers at the DOC who believe that the Governor's recently announced moratorium on the death penalty sends the wrong message, particularly to life-without-parole offenders.

*"I also speak on behalf of my colleagues when I say that the blanket moratorium sends a message to correctional employees that it's okay for us to have a target on our backs, that inmates can kill with impunity if they are serving life without parole because they will suffer no worse consequences for their actions."*

You can view Sergeant Boe's complete testimony on the TVW website.

The sponsors of the bill admit that, even if it passes, it won't stop the Governor from having the final say on executions, it will only require that he listen to the testimony of law enforcement and others first. ●

## Scholarship Opportunity! Jeff Alfieri Scholarship



**Are you a member of Teamsters 117 and the parent of a student in need of money for college?**

Local 117 is now accepting applications for the 2014 Jeff Alfieri Scholarship of up to \$2000.

The deadline for scholarship application submissions is May 9, 2014. View application materials at [www.teamsters117.org](http://www.teamsters117.org).

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**March 20, 2014** - General quarterly membership meeting

**March 21, 2014** - DOC Shop Stewards meeting in Seattle

**March 22, 2014** - Shop Stewards Seminar & Appreciation Day

**April 22, 2014** - DOC contract negotiations begin

**Late August 2014** - Interest arbitration hearing

## TEAMSTERS 117 ON THE WEB!



For more Teamsters news, visit the Local 117 website at [www.teamsters117.org](http://www.teamsters117.org).