

## **INTEREST ARBITRATION FOR WA STATE CORRECTIONAL EMPLOYEES (HB1490)**

Correctional employees perform one of the most stressful, dangerous jobs in the United States. The State of Washington, however, has failed to acknowledge the uniquely dangerous nature of corrections' work. The State Legislature must take action to pass interest arbitration legislation – HB1490. Interest arbitration would allow a neutral arbitrator, mutually selected, to settle contract disputes that cannot be resolved in negotiations. County correctional employees, the Washington State Patrol, local police officers, firefighters and other law enforcement and public safety professionals have broad interest arbitration rights. It is time that our State's correctional employees are afforded these rights as well.

### **State prison workers perform a uniquely stressful and dangerous job:**

- Correctional officers have one of the highest rates of non-fatal on-the-job injuries.
- Suicide rates among corrections employees is 39% higher than any other occupation.
- The average life expectancy of a corrections officer is 58 years old.

### **Interest arbitration will ensure that correctional employees are treated with the same respect as other public safety professionals:**

- HB 1490 will ensure a level playing field and give DOC employees the respect, dignity, and fairness in negotiations that is long overdue.
- With interest arbitration, contract proposals that remain unresolved in bargaining would be given fair, impartial consideration.
- Correctional employees have given up the right to strike because of their dedication to public safety. Interest arbitration will provide a fair and timely process for addressing issues in contract negotiations that might otherwise result in a labor dispute.
- County correctional employees, the Washington State Patrol, local police officers, firefighters and other law enforcement and public safety professionals have broad interest arbitration rights; correctional employees should have the same rights that have been granted to every other public safety group in Washington State.

### **Interest arbitration will not have a significant impact on the State budget:**

- Interest arbitration provides an incentive for the parties to reach an agreement; it prevents costly litigation and appeals' processes and reduces the number of unfair labor practice charges the State must investigate.
- Since 2007, there have been only 6 interest arbitration decisions regarding county corrections despite the fact that 19 counties are interest arbitration eligible.
- Local 117 has not gone to interest arbitration with its eligible groups for over a decade.
- HB1490 contains a "fiscal feasibility" clause, which would protect the State in the event of an unreasonably costly award.