SEATTLE DRIVERS WIN WITH HISTORIC VOTE

For-hire drivers win the right to collectively bargain after unanimous City Council vote

Drivers celebrate after the unanimous 8-0 vote by the Seattle City Council.

Drivers in Seattle’s for-hire industry have won the right to collectively bargain over their wages and working conditions through an initiative passed by the City Council. The bill passed unanimously on December 14.

Drivers and community supporters celebrated the bill’s passage, calling it a turning point toward greater protections for workers in a changing economic landscape.

“By giving us rights, this law will help all of the drivers and also help our communities,” said Peter Kuel, an Uber driver and member of the leadership council of the App-Based Drivers Association.

Under the proposal, drivers would have the ability to come together to choose a non-profit organization to represent them. Once authorized, the organization could engage in collective bargaining on the drivers’ behalf. The new law would apply to all taxi drivers, for-hire drivers, and drivers for app-based dispatch companies, such as Uber and Lyft.

DRIVERS FIGHTING FOR A VOICE

Over the past several months, for-hire drivers have become increasingly vocal about the need for change in the industry.

“Since I started driving for Uber, Uber has cut our pay without notice, terminated drivers without giving a reason, and blocked our efforts to improve our working conditions. We’re looking for fairness and the ability to earn a living wage,” Kuel said.

Taxicab operators also expressed their support of the proposal. “As a cab driver, making a living has become really hard,” said Aamar Kahn, who drives a wheelchair accessible taxi for Yellow Cab. “All we are asking for is a level playing field and that can’t happen until drivers have the right to speak up.”

Because of their disputed status as independent contractors, for-hire drivers don’t have the ability to unionize through a traditional NLRB election process, and they aren’t covered under Seattle’s wage theft, sick leave, or new $15/hr minimum wage law.

To address these inequities, drivers approached Teamsters Local 117 for assistance in getting organized.

Taxi drivers formed the Western Washington Taxicab Operators Association in 2012. In 2013, drivers for app-based dispatch companies formed the App-Based Drivers Association. Both organizations work closely with Teamsters Local 117 to ensure that drivers are treated fairly.

“I want to congratulate drivers on winning a major victory” said John Scearcy, Secretary-Treasurer of Teamsters Local 117. “All workers, no matter where they work or the nature of their work, deserve the opportunity to have a voice. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights identifies the right of workers to bargain collectively as a fundamental human right. Now these workers have that right.”

While both Uber and Lyft have indicated they may challenge the drivers’ right to have a voice in the courts, drivers were undeterred.

“This bill means a lot to us drivers,” said Fasil Teka of the App-Based Drivers Association. “It can have a positive impact, not just for drivers in Seattle, but for independent contractors across the country.”
A Message from your Secretary-Treasurer

Brothers and Sisters:

As we give thanks this holiday season, we must not forget to honor the sacrifice of the men and women who put their lives on the line every day to serve and protect our communities.

While most of us will be spending the holidays with our families, thousands of correctional employees, police officers, military personnel, and other first responders throughout our region will miss celebrations with their loved ones. They will be on duty, fulfilling their responsibility to keep the public safe.

As a society, we don’t do enough to recognize the men and women who devote their lives to protecting the public. It is only when tragedy strikes – like the horrifying attacks in Paris or San Bernardino – that the true value of public safety work is recognized.

Unlike most public service agencies, our prisons and police departments do not close over the holidays. The work of our correctional and patrol officers and the vast network of personnel supporting them does not cease.

Work does not “slow down” for police officers, firefighters, and 911 dispatchers between Christmas and New Year’s. On the contrary, accidents occur more frequently and theft and property crime tend to increase.

Recently, at the Monroe Correctional Complex, an inmate brutally assaulted a male and female officer in the prison dining hall. Both officers were taken to the hospital, treated, and released.

This type of incident occurs far more frequently than people realize. Dozens of state correctional employees are assaulted every year. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, correctional officers have one of the highest rates of non-fatal, work-related injuries. Many miss months of employment recovering from injuries sustained when they are on duty.

The two officers who were assaulted in the Monroe prison incident will now spend this holiday season, and perhaps longer, recovering from the attack.

Although we may not be able to completely stamp out assaults on prison staff, we can prioritize staff safety in our state. We can do this by ensuring adequate staffing levels, segregating repeat offenders, eliminating custody overrides, and providing proper training.

The holidays are a time to give thanks. As we celebrate with our friends and families, we must also remember to express our gratitude for the service, dedication, and sacrifice of the men and women who risk their lives to keep all of us safe.

Thank you for all that you do. Happy holidays to you and your family.

In Solidarity,

John Scearcy
Secretary-Treasurer

TEAMSTERS AT KING COUNTY MAKE EVERY VOICE COUNT

Member to Member Lunchtime Interviews

Teamster Shop Stewards and other leaders at King County interviewed fellow members in December as a part of our Every Voice Counts project. Interviews took place in a relaxed environment, over lunch in the County’s Chinook building.

The purpose of the event was to discuss issues at work, and brainstorm solutions. Folks had lots to say about how to improve their benefits and working conditions, and even their safety.

“I’m concerned about the recent shootings,” said Enrique Ferrer, a weapons screener at the Regional Justice Center in Kent. “We could be susceptible to that, too.”

Members also discussed recent attacks on labor, in Wisconsin and elsewhere, and a case currently before the Supreme Court that could place significant burdens on public sector unions.

SUPREME COURT CASE COULD PUT OUR UNION AT RISK

If the Court rules against working people in Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association, it could create a union-hostile environment in public sector workplaces across the country.
Drivers at Transdev Vote to Join Teamsters Local 117

Drivers Join Teamsters Local 117 Seeking Retirement Security, Affordable Health Benefits, Fair Treatment, and Respect

Drivers at Transdev, who are employed by Transdev, have voted to join Teamsters Local 117. The 260 workers came together seeking retirement security, affordable health care, fair and equal treatment, strong representation, and respect.

The vote took place at the company’s facilities in Kent, Bellevue, and Shoreline on December 8.

“Making our work environment better for the future,” said John Secord, a 4-year Transdev employee. “I’m excited to go to the bargaining table to finally get some recognition, fight for better benefits, and secure a better future for everybody.”

Through an agreement with King County, Transdev employees transport elderly and disabled residents of King County to locations throughout the Puget Sound region. The workers voted to become Teamsters in an NLRB election on December 8.

“After years of hard work, we deserve to retire with dignity,” said Sherrie Tinner, a 10-year driver who operates out of the Kent Base.

Drivers Want Affordable Health Care and Retirement Security

The drivers also identified improving their health benefits as a priority during the organizing drive. “I want the respect and benefits that comes with having a voice,” said Stephen Boeckman, a driver out of Transdev’s Bellevue base.

“We are excited to welcome Transdev drivers to the Teamsters,” said John Scearcy, Secretary-Treasurer of Teamsters Local 117. “The drivers worked tirelessly to win their union. The next step is to improve their working conditions by negotiating a strong Teamsters contract.”

Transdev is a French-based transport company with operations in 21 countries. Transdev North America operates the paratransit service for the King County Accessible Services division.

South Sound Public Sector Leadership Summit

Committed to Each Other: Family - Strength - Community

On Saturday, January 9, Shop Stewards and member leaders employed in our public sector shops in the South Sound region will be gathering at the IBEW Union Hall in Tacoma to build power and solidarity in the workplace.

With the ongoing attacks on public sector unions in the courts and statehouses across the country, we need to make sure that our union is strong so that we can preserve our hard-won wages and continue to improve our working conditions.

Join Other Union Members As We:

- Learn more about anti-union laws and other recent attacks on labor
- Talk about how we can build power in the workplace and protect our rights
- Discuss ways to build solidarity and share best practices

Space is limited! To reserve a spot, register online at www.Teamsters117.org
LOCAL 117 EVENTS - MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Jan. 9, 2016 - South Sound Public Sector Leadership Summit
Jan. 18, 2016 - MLK March and Rally
April 16, 2016 - Teamsters Casino Night Fundraiser
March 11, 2016 - DOC Shop Steward Training
March 12, 2016 - Shop Steward Seminar & Appreciation Day

TEAMSTERS 117 ON THE WEB!

Visit your Union’s new website at www.teamsters117.org. Join your Union’s Facebook page, follow us on Twitter @teamsters117, and watch Local 117 videos on YouTube!

Sign up online to receive an electronic copy of Teamster Talk at www.teamsters117.org.