

SPRING 2018



TEAMSTERS LOCAL 117

THE GUARDIAN

News from the hardworking Teamsters of DOC



HONOR OUR
PUBLIC SERVANTS

WE SERVE & PROTECT
OUR COMMUNITIES

Teamsters

117

GREAT NEWS! AUDIT OF STAFFING
LEVELS ON THE WAY

ON THE STEPS OF THE STATE CAPITOL



A MESSAGE FROM

MICHELLE WOODROW

PRESIDENT & DIRECTOR OF CORRECTIONS & LAW ENFORCEMENT



Power in Numbers

LOBBY DAY, NEGOTIATIONS, AND THE POWER OF A UNITED MEMBERSHIP

Every time large numbers of DOC Teamsters assemble in Olympia I am amazed at what we can accomplish.

This year was no different. In February, hundreds of members and their families traveled to the state capitol to meet with their legislators for our DOC lobby day.

PRIORITY #1: AN AUDIT OF STAFFING LEVELS

Our number one legislative priority was to fund an external audit of staffing levels at the DOC.

The need for an audit is glaring. The DOC is operating under a staffing model that was developed in the 1980's. As we all know, much has changed in the last 30 years.

The murder of Officer Biendl in 2011 led to changes at the Department that stiffened security measures, but did little to add more boots on the ground. Staff have been required to do more with dwindling resources.

An audit is the first step in addressing staffing deficiencies. It will help identify issues in ageing facilities and the areas in the prisons where staff may be overburdened or unsafe.

Our work as a union to fund a staffing audit started three years ago. This year we made it happen. Your emails, phone calls, and meetings with legislators made the difference.

Once again, legislators heard our voice loud and clear.

THE JANUS THREAT

This victory comes in the face of a serious threat. With a decision in the *Janus* court case looming, our ability to make meaningful change in Olympia is under attack.

The case, which will almost certainly lead to open shop in the public sector, threatens public employees across the country, including all Teamsters working at the Department of Corrections.

Unless we fortify our union by educating and committing to each other, achievements like our staffing audit may become few and far between.

Janus could also impact our ability to negotiate strong contracts. A divided membership sends the wrong message to the State as we head into contact negotiations, which are scheduled to get rolling this spring.

FAMILY. STRENGTH. COMMUNITY.

That's why it's so important for us to educate each other about the threat of open shop and how it could impact our union.

So far thousands of DOC Teamsters have taken a critical step. They've signed commitment cards, pledging to stand together no matter what happens with *Janus*.

The total number of us who sign cards sends an important message to the employer as we head into contract negotiations. Will we allow the State or the

wealthy special interests behind the *Janus* case to divide us? Or will we stand together, united for better wages and working conditions and a strong contract?

Time will tell. But if the unity and power in numbers displayed at lobby day are any indication, I'm certain that we will stand together and always have each other's backs.

For more information about the *Janus* case, please visit www.FamilyStrengthCommunity.org.

Thank you for your service and for your membership in Teamsters Local 117.

Respectfully,

Michelle Woodrow
President and Director
of Corrections & Law
Enforcement

DOC shop stewards meet at the union hall in Tukwila on March 16.



STEWARDS POWER!

DOC STEWARDS ASSEMBLE FOR TRAINING, NEGOTIATIONS PREP

Seventy DOC shop stewards gathered at the Teamsters union hall in Tukwila this March for training, discussion, and preparation for upcoming contract negotiations.

The event was part of our union's annual **Shop Steward Seminar and Appreciation Day**, which brings together all Local 117 stewards from across the state under one roof.

The DOC program kicked off with a review of steward roles and responsibilities. The group brainstormed best practices for confronting management and for defending members' rights under the contract.

Our union's political team, Dustin Lambro and Brenda Wiest, talked about recent successes in Olympia. Most notably, we were able to achieve funding in the state budget for an external audit of staffing levels at the DOC, something we have been working on for the last several years.

Stewards devoted some of the training to prepare for open shop, which we expect will be coming to the DOC and other public sector workplaces this spring. The U.S. Supreme Court is set to rule on the *Janus v AFSCME* case, which will likely change the rules for public sector union members and threatens our right to stand together for strong contracts.

"My main goal is to make sure that everybody is on board to commit to keep our union strong," said Teresa Bennett,

a pharmacy technician with over 20 years with the state.

"I remind my co-workers that the union isn't only about protecting people who get in trouble. It's about better health care, better wages, and better working conditions. At the pharmacy, if the union hadn't been there to negotiate, the state would have probably gotten rid of our jobs."

The steward program concluded with a strategy session to prepare for upcoming DOC contract negotiations, which are slated to get started this May.

"Teamsters who work in corrections put their lives on the line to protect the public," said John Scearcy, Secretary-Treasurer of Teamsters 117.

"Our stewards are the first line of defense. They enforce our contract, engage in tough negotiations with management, keep the membership informed, and have each other's backs. Their service is indispensable to the strength and power of our union." ●

MY MAIN GOAL IS TO MAKE SURE THAT EVERYBODY IS ON BOARD TO COMMIT TO KEEP OUR UNION STRONG.

**TERESA BENNETT
PHARMACY TECH, 20 YRS**



A GREAT DAY



**WE ARE THE UNION. YOU ARE THE UNION. WE
NEED TO TAKE THE BULL BY THE HORNS TO
FIGHT OFF THESE ATTACKS TOGETHER.**

- GERRY PINERO - CO2/WCCW
Teamster since 1974



FOR THE



IN OLYMPIA

DOC TEAMSTERS FILL THE STEPS OF THE STATE CAPITOL FOR A LOBBY DAY RALLY

It was an impressive sight. Hundreds of Teamsters and their family members gathered on the steps of the state capitol in Olympia for our 2018 lobby day.

Bright yellow scarves with horse heads draped across members' shoulders. Many held signs that read *Honor Our Public Servants* and *Public Service, Public Safety*.

Michelle Woodrow, our union's president addressed the crowd: "Thank you for your outstanding service and for keeping our communities safe."

Just a short time earlier, Local 117 members had clustered outside the doors of the Senate and House chambers requesting meetings with their legislators. With a

cutoff to pass bills looming, conversations had to be short and direct.

"We just met with Senator Sheldon," said Sergeant Larry Reeves, a Teamster at the Washington Corrections Center. "He said he would be more than happy to support a bipartisan effort to see if we can get our staffing model audit funded."

"This is wonderful," said Fran Deel, a nurse at the Airway Heights Corrections Center who brought her three grandchildren to the event. "I'm here to make sure our rights are represented and to make sure our union has the power to negotiate."

In addition to calling for an audit of DOC staffing levels, members urged legislators to pass bills that protect the

privacy of public employees and give us a better opportunity to welcome new employees into the union.

The day's activities culminated with a rally on the capitol steps. Newly-elected Teamster councilmember of the City of Burien, Pedro Olguin, fired up the group with a series of chants.

Woodrow introduced the speakers starting with Representative Roger Goodman, the chair of the House Public Safety Committee. He was followed by three members: Officers Alfredo Cruz, Debra Gordon and Gerry Pinero.

Pinero, who made the trip to Olympia with his wife Angelic, talked about Teamster pride and the need to defend our

union. "I started with the Teamsters in 1974 and have always been treated well by the Teamster family fighting for better benefits, better conditions, and better pay."

"But senior Teamster staff can't do it alone," he said. "We are the union. You are the union. We need to take the bull by the horns to fight off these attacks together."

John Searcy, our union's Secretary-Treasurer, echoed Pinero's call for unity. "When we stand together, we're stronger. When we talk about our core values and find out where we align, we can move an agenda. This lobby day is a perfect example of us showing that when we're committed to each other, we are strong and our voices will be heard." ●

Local 117 member Sammi Muecke works in the mailroom at WSP.

“MY UNION FIGHTS FOR COMPETITIVE WAGES, DECENT HEALTH BENEFITS, AND SAFE WORKING CONDITIONS FOR ME AND MY CO-WORKERS.

S.L. MUECKE
TEAMSTER AT WSP

HONOR OUR
PUBLIC SERVANTS



TEAMSTER

in the NEWS

SAMMI MUECKE PUBLISHED THIS EDITORIAL IN THE WALLA WALLA UNION BULLETIN ABOUT THE NEED TO STAND TOGETHER AS WE FACE OPEN SHOP

This week the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in a case, *Janus v AFSCME*, which could negatively impact public service unions across the country.

As union members employed at the Washington State Penitentiary, many of my co-workers and I are deeply concerned. If the Court rules as expected, so-called "right-to-work" would become the law of the land in all public sector workplaces.

Workers will be able to opt-out of paying their fair share in dues but will continue to reap all of the benefits of their union contract and representation without having to pay anything for it.

This threatens to divide us and weaken our union. Our ability to speak out for fair conditions at work, strong protections in our contract, and safety on the job are at stake.

My experience with the dismal working conditions in a right-to-work state is telling. In 2012, my husband and I moved to

North Carolina, where I worked as a teacher in the public schools. What were the consequences of that move? I took a \$7,000 annual pay cut, lost all of my health benefits and most of my paid holidays.

The state's hiring

standards were abysmally low and many teachers were underqualified. At end of the day, it was our students who paid the price for "right to work."

Here in Washington State, my union fights for competitive wages, decent health benefits, and safe working conditions for me and my co-workers. We can hold our bosses accountable and are protected from arbitrary

firing. We cannot be "let go" or forced out as we near retirement age. Our years of experience and service matter.

These protections and legitimate "rights at work" are especially important when facing the

have been injured in the line of duty.

The Washington State Penitentiary employs well over a thousand employees. We are officers, sergeants, counselors, nurses, dentists, psychologists, prison chaplains, clerical staff, maintenance staff, and many others. We put our lives on the line every day when we report to work.

Imagine all of us talking all at once about our own individual workplace concerns. The result would be a cacophonous mess without direction or power. Our union allows us to express our concerns with one powerful voice.

We may not be able to prevent the Court from ruling against us in the *Janus* case, but we can continue to stand together with one united front and speak with one voice. Apart, we are powerless, rudderless and too easily ignored. Together we are strong.

Published in the Walla Walla Union Bulletin on March 1. ●

OUR UNION ALLOWS US TO EXPRESS OUR CONCERNS WITH ONE POWERFUL VOICE.

- SAMMI MUECKE, WSP TEAMSTER

dangers that exist inside a prison. As a union, we have each other's backs. Together, we look out for each other and make sure that our jobs are safe and secure.

In Olympia, members of Teamsters Local 117 worked together to extend critical benefits for officers and other prison staff who are assaulted on the job. This allows us to continue to support our families and care for ourselves when we

WINS FOR WORKERS

GOOD NEWS FROM THE 2018 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The 2018 legislative session wrapped up with some important wins for DOC Teamsters and other workers across our state.

As a union, we were successful in achieving many of our legislative priorities.

Most notably, thanks to a strong turnout on lobby day, we secured funding in the budget for an external audit of staffing levels at the DOC.

This is a major victory for Local 117 members. The Department has been

operating under a staffing model that has not been reviewed in 30 years. The current model does not account for the deficiencies of the aging facilities and the additional demands placed on staff. This has led to serious safety concerns in an already dangerous environment.

An audit at the DOC is an important step in making our prisons safer for the staff who risk their lives to protect our communities.

Several hundred DOC members will also benefit from a bill (HB 1558)

that provides greater retirement security through a modest expansion of the Public Safety Employees' Retirement System (PSERS).

Through our lobbying efforts, Local 117 members were instrumental in helping to pass a measure (SB 6229) that carves out time for unions to provide orientation to new employees.

Some additional highlights include the passage of laws that ensure gender equity in the workplace (HB 1506), remove barriers

to voting (SB 6002), and expand workers' comp insurance coverage for law enforcement (SB 1614) and for Hanford workers suffering from occupational disease (HB 1773).

Many of these bills had been languishing in Olympia for years.

Thanks to your lobby visits, phone calls and emails, and changes to the makeup of the legislature, we are seeing many policy changes that will strengthen our communities and make a difference in the lives of working families. ●



New Rep, Amy Ford

WELCOME NEW UNION REP, AMY FORD!

Amy got her start at DOC in Health Services at WSP as a patient and staff scheduler. Later she worked with a correctional program manager and volunteered to facilitate offender change programs.

Prior to joining the staff of Local 117, Amy was a shop steward for two and a half years. She never stops learning and is currently finishing her degree in IT Administration and Business Management.

Amy is a mom to four beautiful children and is active in her local church. She is a wonderful addition to our team and will be representing Teamsters at WSP. ●

THE GUARDIAN 

**UPCOMING
EVENTS**

APRIL - DOC contract proposal meetings - statewide

MAY - DOC contract negotiations gets underway

JUNE 21 - General Membership Meeting, Tukwila

TEAMSTERS LOCAL 117
Secretary-Treasurer: John Searcy
President: Michelle Woodrow

14675 Interurban Ave. S.
Tukwila, WA 98168
1-888-872-3489

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