TEAMSTERS ACROSS INDUSTRIES STAND IN SOLIDARITY TO PROTECT A SHOP STEWARD AGAINST RETALIATION.  P. 3-4
SISTERS AND BROTHERS -

Amazon recently announced a wage increase to a minimum of $15 for all of its workers. This decision is a direct result of public and political pressure on the company as reports of worker abuse and safety violations are mounting. However, the giant internet retailer is free to display a public act of generosity while simultaneously cutting employees’ bonuses and stock awards. This happens because the company is not held accountable internally for the decisions taken which directly affect the employees.

The Teamsters shop that you are working at, at one point, had no union. The workers at that location had to make the daunting decision to change how things are. They risked their positions and their families’ livelihoods to stand together as one and break through their employer’s resistance. They demanded that their right to negotiate with the employer for wages, working conditions, and benefits be recognized, and they won this fight.

We cannot forget these fights, and many of us never do. Our Sisters and Brothers who keep our union strong step out of the daily routine to advocate for co-workers. These are the shop stewards and member leaders who understand that our strength is in our unity and that solidarity is our weapon. They have the same work and family obligations as the rest of us, but they choose to lead, learn, and stand up for fairness at work. They sit through contract negotiations, dispel anti-union propaganda, and constantly organize their peers for strength.

At our general membership meeting in September, we honored many members who sat on the negotiations committees and the graduates of our first ever Teamsters Leadership Academy who dedicated their time for eight months to cultivate their leadership and worker advocacy skills. It is important that we all recognize the hard work, passion, and dedication of members who step up to the task and become the advocates of our union to keep us strong and continue to move us forward.

Workers need unions, and our children who are entering the workforce depend on today’s Teamsters to keep our union strong just as we depended on the Teamsters that came before us. Let us never forget that we stand on the shoulders of our predecessors, and it is our duty to preserve and build upon their efforts.

We are the union!

In Solidarity,

John Scearcy
Secretary-Treasurer
TEAMSTERS WIN STRONG CONTRACT AT SUPERVALU

In August, Teamsters who work in SuperValu’s grocery warehouse in Tacoma voted overwhelmingly to ratify a new three-year contract. The contract provides annual wage increases, excellent health and welfare coverage, and retirement security for over 200 members of Local 117 and their families.

“One of the highlights for me was ensuring full maintenance of our medical benefits,” said Anthony McKinney, a shop steward who served on our union’s negotiations committee. “A lot of my co-workers are on their way to having children. They’ll see the incredible benefit of keeping this medical coverage in our contract.”

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This fall Teamsters at KC will be voting on a fully recommended agreement on economics.

This includes the landslide victory of 4% general wage increase for 2019 and a total of 3% general wage increase for 2020 plus a $500 bonus only offered to Coalition Union members.

It also includes enhancements to insurance such as a full reinstatement of retiree benefits, long-term disability paid for by the County, an added voluntary short-term disability plan and increased benefits for vision coverage. Including the raises negotiated in the MLA agreement, this means an increase to wages of 10.25% (plus a $500 bonus) over a three-year span.

The unions across the County have been negotiating with the County for months and are finalizing the individual contracts in small table bargaining. Once the negotiations are wrapped up, we are heading to a vote in a few weeks. Please watch for upcoming dates and vote on your contract.

The entire bargaining team put in many hours of negotiations, work and advocacy and are confident that it will be a competitive package for our members.
Inside the Coke warehouse, everyone knows Van Huynh. Van is an outstanding shop steward who does not tolerate injustice and always stands up for his co-workers.

But Van is more than that. He is a survivor of Viet Cong atrocities. When his family immigrated to the U.S., he dealt with debilitating disease, the loss of his sister, and poverty. Working hard despite all odds, Van provided for his family, including a handicapped parent, and today his kids are on the way to college. Van is the stuff American dreams are made of.

Evidently this means little to Van’s employer. In September, Swire Coca-Cola, forced him to accept what they deceptively called a “voluntary resignation.” Instead of granting him a leave of absence as Van had requested, the company took advantage of long immigration backlogs to terminate him.

TEAMSTERS RALLY BEHIND LOCAL 117 SHOP STEWARD, VAN HUYNH
Van’s story reached beyond his workplace and resonated with Teamsters at Schnitzer Steel in Tacoma. They demanded justice for Van and wore solidarity stickers. At the September membership meeting more Teamsters stood up for the unjustly treated shop steward. This overwhelming support paid off. On Friday, October 19, Van was reinstated in his position at Coke without losing his seniority. Van has been a Shop Steward for two years and has worked aggressively to enforce our contract at Coke and protect members’ rights under the contract. He is also a graduate of our Teamster Leadership Academy and authored a powerful story about how the union has positively impacted his life. “Van is an inspiration to members across our union,” said John Scearcy, Secretary-Treasurer of Teamsters Local 117. “We will fight to protect his rights under the contract and under the law and will hold Coke accountable for retaliation of any kind for Van’s involvement in the union.”

“I can’t wait to be back to work and protect my people.” — Van Huynh

In the petition, members demanded that Coke grant Van an immediate leave of absence so that he can return to work as soon as his paperwork is processed. Van’s story reached beyond his workplace and resonated with Teamsters at Schnitzer Steel in Tacoma. They demanded justice for Van and wore solidarity stickers. At the September membership meeting more Teamsters stood up for the unjustly treated shop steward.

Van’s co-workers were dismayed at the company’s actions. In the Swire Coca-Cola warehouse, they wore solidarity stickers and signed a petition in support of the eight-year Local 117 member.

A representative of the Department of Justice (DOJ) contacted Coke management to inform them that the termination was unnecessary. Nevertheless, Coke disregarded the information provided by the DOJ and moved ahead with the “voluntary resignation.”

Teamsters Leadership Academy participants who just finished up an 8-month training recognised at membership meeting. Van Huynh is one of the award recipients.
Postal service, where he was a shop steward for his union. Her husband, Josh Hoopes, is a Local 117 member at Animal Supply. "Getting this job was everything for me," she said. "Being Teamsters is exactly what my dad wanted for me. It felt like our future was set – you couldn’t ask for anything more."

Tambra and Monica have been teaming up to alert their co-workers about the potential impact of the Janus court case. They’ve talked about the importance of sticking with the union. Their call for solidarity has been effective as nearly all Port of Seattle bus drivers have signed cards committing to the union. "When we stand together, our freedom, power and unity cannot be taken from us," Monica says.

"We were trying to unify all of us drivers and get us to become one," Tambra said.

Tambra hails from a strong union family. Her father worked for the postal service, where he was a shop steward for his union. Her husband, Josh Hoopes, is a Local 117 member at Animal Supply. "Getting this job was everything for me," she said. "Being Teamsters is exactly what my dad wanted for me. It felt like our future was set – you couldn’t ask for anything more."

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― Tambra Fontes

Getting people signed up on commitment cards was essential, but the two women also wanted a symbol that matched the message. "Being a driver, it’s kind of hard for all of us to connect," Tambra said. "The wristbands are something that we can wear to let everybody know we’re all one."

With contract negotiations coming up next year, sustaining that unity will be key. The drivers have already shown that no court case or external group can weaken their voice on the job. Tambra and Monica have decided that they want to keep their union strong. And because of members like them, it is.

You’ll see them on the wrists of bus drivers circling around Sea-Tac Airport – white bands bearing a message of unity and strength. The bands read: We decide how strong our union will be. When drivers pass each other on their routes, they raise their fists as a show of union pride.

Local 117 member Tambra Fontes got the idea for the wristbands, together with shop steward Monica Petty. "We were trying to unify all of us drivers and get us to become one," Tambra said.

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In July, the Port of Seattle Commission voted to approve an agreement to officially end taxi contractor Eastside for Hire’s “Pay-to-Work” fleet reduction plan, and provide stability for the remainder of Eastside’s contract with the Port.

Teamsters taxi and flat-rate drivers celebrated the victory and vowed to continue to take action through their union to have a voice at work.

Back in April, taxi contractor Eastside for Hire announced the “Pay-to-Work” scheme by giving drivers just 5 days to make a choice – either agree to pay $9,000, or lose your airport job.

Facing this impossible choice, over 200 drivers joined in a job action protesting the “Pay-to-Work” scheme. Taking action was a risk since some drivers had already been suspended by the company following a protest of exorbitant fees and unsanitary working conditions the previous year.

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— Worku Belayneh

Throughout the campaign, drivers’ solidarity and commitment to each other was put to the test. Following one Port Commission meeting at which drivers testified, Eastside for Hire announced 30 day termination notices for 29 vehicles and their drivers.

But, drivers did not back down. They rallied behind “The Sea-Tac 29” and raised their voices louder.

In the end, drivers’ strength and unity raised their plight to the top of the list on a busy Commission agenda even in a time of rapid airport expansion. The Port Commissioners understood that they had to act on this pressing issue.

Under the agreement approved in July, Eastside for Hire is prohibited from increasing driver fees for the remainder of their contract with the Port. In fact, driver fees will decrease by $95 per week in June of 2019. Eastside for Hire cannot terminate any driver for prior actions they took protesting among other things.

“We could never have achieved this victory without the union,” concludes Worku Belayneh, a driver at SeaTac. “Now I can focus on doing my job and raising my three children.”

THEY NEVER GAVE UP: DRIVERS’ UNITY AND RESILIENCE PREVAILS AT SEATAC, ENDS “PAY-TO-WORK”
Teamsters and their family members came together to create signs at the September membership meeting and later joined their union sisters and brothers in protesting the anti-worker “Freedom” Foundation fundraiser in Bellevue.

DON’T MISS
Teamsters Blood Drive
November 17

Holiday Membership Meeting
December 20

UNION STRONG

“Unions” are the foundations of freedom and rights for all.