



On The Move

August 3, 2016

Official Publication of TWU Local 234

www.twulocal234.net

WE MUST RISE TO THE CHALLENGE

Contract negotiations are entering a new phase and our members are the key to victory. In fact, SEPTA is *testing our members*; they are testing our resolve. You can see it in the Authority's contract demands, including one that would give SEPTA the right to "redesign our health care plans." In other words, SEPTA wants the right to gut our health benefits. SEPTA is also testing the common sense of our members, their unity and willingness to fight for a good contract. They know that a misinformed, divided and inactive membership means victory for SEPTA. The stakes are high. We must and we will rise to the occasion.

This round of negotiations is different from the past.

The 2016 negotiations present a unique opportunity for us to fix some significant problems relating to our pension, working conditions, unjust discipline and job security, especially for the cashiers, who face automation. It is essential that the most important problems get fixed now, because, next time, it may be too late. There are political forces at work across the country trying to defeat the labor movement and we don't know what might happen in the U.S. presidential election.

According to an expert, public sector unions are under growing pressure from "conservative activists and politicians," making this the "most perilous moment" the public sector labor movement has faced *since its inception*. The appointment of another anti-union, justice to the Supreme Court will doom us. It almost happened last year, but the most anti-union justice died before he got the chance to vote against the unions that support us and our families.

This puts us in a tough position, but one we can conquer if everyone realizes what is at stake. We have the chance to win important *structural* changes in the pension and the chance to win more peace of mind on the job, by easing discipline and by improving working conditions for our members. All this, in addition to addressing higher wages and other issues.

SEPTA knows that the members must be willing to fight to get a good contract. That's why they're watching. In order to unify and mobilize our members, we are organizing the "Solid 234," a network of section officers, safety committee members and other union members who want to join the contract fight. The role of the "Solid 234" is to educate, unify and strengthen the union's hand in negotiations with SEPTA. The first meeting of the "Solid 234" will be announced soon.

Unjust Discipline, Stress and Fatigue on the Job

Local 234 has been fighting SEPTA over the discipline imposed for serious accidents and pedestrian knockdowns. Progress is being made. Between 2010 and 2013, the Union lost every knockdown case it took to arbitration. Recently, however, the Local won two knockdown cases

in arbitration along with the reinstatement of more than a dozen others by settlement. In arbitration, we have established that each case must be evaluated on its own merits. Previously, all knockdown cases were considered *automatic* discharges, regardless of the facts and circumstances of each case. No more.

In addition, the Local is determined to address the underlying causes of these accidents---which are a nation-wide problem, much bigger than SEPTA and much bigger than the mirrors.

We believe that stress, monotony and fatigue are contributing factors. The Department of Transportation agrees, that's why they're setting new limits on work hours. The Local is raising these issues at the bargaining table. Members with ideas on how to address the problem of fatigue should come forward with suggestions.

Stress and fatigue impacts all Local 234 members, yet, as many know, Slate operators, in particular, are victims of horrible work schedules. Long, erratic work hours, p.m. reports one day, a.m. reports the next, split days off---these are just a few of the problems they confront.

One proposal on the table is giving Slate operators the right to pick an "a.m. report," or a "p.m. report," at the regularly scheduled general pickings. This will result in a more stable work schedule and reduce stress and fatigue on the job.

Eliminating operator assaults will also reduce stress.

Assaults against Operators are declining

Putting an end to operator assaults has been one of the Local's top priorities over the past few years. The issue is being raised at every opportunity, with recommendations about how the problem can be addressed. The Union's efforts are showing results. The SEPTA Police Department has adopted new policies and practices to identify, arrest, and prosecute operator assailants. They are also working to publicize the results, to deter those who think they can get away with attacking a SEPTA employee.

The SEPTA Police are using a computer based tracking system to guide the deployment of their police officers. Deployments are being designed to target routes, times and locations where operator assaults are occurring.

Local 234 has no tolerance for operator assaults. Our goal is to reduce the number of assaults to zero. While not there yet, things are moving in the right direction. **Operator assaults are down from a peak of 52 in 2012 to a low of 16 in 2015.** Here are the numbers for reported physical assaults on operators from 2011 through 2015:

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|------|----|
| 2011 | 41 |
| 2012 | 52 |
| 2013 | 33 |
| 2014 | 26 |
| 2015 | 16 |

WE MUST AND WE WILL