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Newsletter of Councilmember **KSHAMA SAWANT**



“ This city has made glittering fortunes for the super wealthy while the needs of working people and the poor are ignored by an out of touch political establishment. Let us join together in a struggle for a more equal and just society. ”

Make Seattle Affordable – For All!

This year will be one of struggle for racial justice, affordable housing, and progressive taxation. The \$15 minimum wage law that we fought for and won needs to be enforced.

As the city council elections approach, voters need to ask themselves which candidates will defend their interests and which will represent the business-as-usual politics of the corporate elites.

While Seattle's wealthy developers make enormous fortunes, we face the fastest rising rents of any major U.S. city. In our district, working families, youth, and people of color

are being evicted by out-of-control rent hikes in neighborhoods from Capitol Hill to the Central Area. This is the issue that affects ordinary people the most, and is at the center of Kshama Sawant's efforts to make Seattle affordable for all.

Since Kshama was elected to the City Council through a grassroots campaign, she has fought hard for the needs of working people. Refusing any corporate donations, she relies on the support of workers and progressive activists. Join Kshama in the fight to make Seattle affordable, city officials accountable, and our environment healthy and sustainable!

Tenants Defeat 400% Rent Hikes

East-African community leader, Ubah Warsame:

“ We fought back and made it impossible for the Seattle Housing Authority, the Mayor, and the City Council to ignore us. Kshama Sawant was with us every step of the way. We need more elected officials like her, willing to take a stand against insane rent hikes. ”



Dear friends & neighbors,

We have officially completed a year in office and what a year it's been!

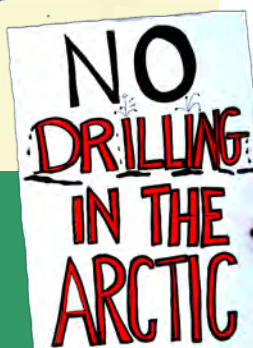
- Thanks to our hard-fought 15 Now campaign, we passed the historic \$15 minimum wage in Seattle.
- To crack down on rampant wage theft in our city, we won additional funding for the new Office of Labor Standards.
- Together with indigenous activists, we established Indigenous Peoples' Day.

These and many other victories have shown what is possible when we build movements—we can overcome resistance from the political establishment and its corporate backers to improve ordinary people's lives. We should celebrate our successes, and then build on them to win even bigger victories.

I hope you will join with me. Let's take our city forward and make Seattle affordable—for all.

Solidarity!

Kshama Sawant



On Page 3 — Stop Shell in Seattle

Arctic oil drilling platform to be repaired in Seattle? Shell NO!

Paid for by Vote Sawant, P.O. Box 85862, Seattle, WA 98145

Kshama Responds to State of the Union



As one of the most prominent socialists elected to public office in the U.S., Kshama Sawant delivered a "Socialist Response to the State of the Union" that was live streamed by thousands and garnered media attention from outlets across the country. See for yourself what all the fuss is about!

tinyurl.com/SawantSotuResponse

Tent City Victory

Homelessness is on the rise. Recently, the annual *One Night Count* found 3,772 people in King County without shelter. This represents a shameful 21% increase over 2014, and it's time to do something to change that. During the City of Seattle budget debate, Kshama Sawant brought together a broad coalition of labor leaders, community organizers, social service providers, and engaged citizens to start a "People's Budget" movement.

Together, they demanded a budget that meets the needs of ordinary people, laying the groundwork for substantial changes to the budget process in the future, while also scoring important victories this year. For example, the "People's Budget" movement won \$100,000 per year in 2015 and 2016 to provide basic needs like tents, cooking facilities, toilets, running water, and garbage collection for the Nickelsville homeless encampment. This is the first time the City Council has ever funded a "tent city," and it pushed the Mayor to propose legislation to expand encampments for the homeless, and allow them on municipal land.

Build Thousands of Affordable Housing Units!

Skyrocketing rents and record home prices make it clear that for-profit developers and the so-called "free market" are colossal failures when it comes to providing affordable housing for working people in Seattle. That's why Kshama Sawant has initiated a proposal for a municipal bond sale to finance the construction of thousands of high quality, city-owned affordable housing units. These units would be rented out at below-market rates to working and middle class people who need an affordable alternative to the out-of-control private housing market.

For years and years, elected officials have done very little to address the growing affordable housing crisis in our city. They

supported a multi-billion dollar public works tunnel project to raise downtown property values - why not a municipal program to build affordable housing?

We could do this right now. Seattle has over \$1 billion of additional bond capacity and it owns 60 acres of unused land that it could use to build housing on. The bonds could be paid off and the properties maintained with truly affordable rents paid by tenants. City staff is currently developing a proposal. What we need to make it a reality is a grassroots movement that forces the City Council and the Mayor to prioritize the need for affordable housing over big developers' desire for ever more profits.

Q & A "My Rent Rose by 130%!"

Kathy Heffernan: *The apartment building where I live was recently sold and the new landlord raised my rent by 130%. Now I have to move out. I know this is happening to thousands all across the city. My question to Councilmember Sawant is: What can our elected representatives do about the crisis of affordable housing in Seattle?*



Kshama Sawant: I believe housing is a human right. Yet in District 3 and across Seattle, we have the fastest rising rents in the country. Homelessness rose by 21% last year and gentrification is pushing communities of color and working people out of the city.

We can solve the housing crisis, but only by taking bold action that challenges big developers and the market. We need a movement of tenants and ordinary homeowners that fights for:

- **Rent control** – Rents throughout the city should not be able to rise faster than the cost of living.

- **Thousands of city-owned affordable housing units** –

Seattle should sell bonds to build thousands of high quality, city-owned housing units, rented at below-market rates.

While building a movement to win much needed far-reaching change, we should pressure city officials to take immediate action to:

- **Impose high impact fees and linkage fees** – Developers enjoy huge profits in Seattle; make them pay high fees to fund affordable housing.
- **Increase notice for rent hikes** – Working people need more than 60 days to deal with the implications of high rent increases. Landlords should be required to give much more notice.
- **Invest in ending homelessness** – Don't waste billions on tunnels and waterfronts, invest in jobs, housing, and services for working and poor people.

Contact Councilmember Sawant



Shell: Climate Change Made in Seattle?

The Port of Seattle is finalizing a deal with Foss Maritime to use the vacant Terminal 5 as a temporary facility to repair one of Shell Oil's arctic drilling platforms, which ran aground last year in Alaska. Port commissioners were briefed on the proposal, which was negotiated in secret for months.

Terminal 5 is closed while its facilities are being upgraded to serve the new megaships that require larger cranes and stronger wharves.

Noting public opposition to this climate-killing proposal, some port commissioners claimed they are against drilling in the arctic and reiterated their supposed commitment to the environment. Nonetheless, the Commission refused to vote against it. Port Commissioner

Bill Bryant even indicated it was useless to oppose the project, saying, "rejecting this lease is not going to protect our environment, but it will cost us over 200 jobs and many hundred more jobs in related businesses." So much for the Port of Seattle's motto "Where a Sustainable World is Headed."

Kshama Sawant rejects this defeatist approach: "on the day of the world's largest ever demonstration to stop climate change, Seattle saw an impressive coalition of labor and environmental groups on the streets last September," she said, "I'm confident that we can bring this coalition together again to oppose the use of a public port to promote Shell Oil's profits at the cost of the destruction of the Arctic and the climate."

Women's Shelter Wins Funding

The "People's Budget" coalition, brought together by Councilmember Sawant, succeeded in winning first-time funding for a year-round, low-barrier, women's homeless shelter.

In addition to cold weather, women on the streets frequently face the threat of sexual assault and physical violence, and need some place to go. Thanks to the "People's Budget" coalition, the City will now allocate \$120,000 per year in both 2015 and 2016 to begin addressing this urgent need.

The Fight against Wage Theft

As the \$15 minimum wage law takes effect on April 1, and as cases of wage theft like at Wet Seal in Northgate Mall make headlines, working people must organize to make sure laws protecting workers are actually enforced.

So far the City has a dismal track record. In 2011, the Seattle City Council formally outlawed wage theft. Yet to this day, not a single business has been prosecuted, even though the U.S. Labor Department found violations in 71% of the West Coast restaurants it investigated from 2006-2012.

That's why Councilmember Sawant helped to win increased funding for the newly created Office of Labor Standards, which is tasked with enforcing the minimum wage law. She also introduced a successful amendment requiring the City Council to consider increasing the penalties for wage theft. Sawant said, "We need real penalties. When a worker steals from his or her boss, they lose their job and likely go to jail. Why don't we treat labor-law violators the same?"

Will the City Council finally start taking wage theft seriously? That depends on workers' ability to organize to defend their rights. It also depends on whether or not we have city officials like Sawant prepared to fight for working people.

Workers at the Space Needle get Organized



Space Needle workers came to City Hall on January 20 to report low wages and blatant retaliation for union organizing.

Seattle's new Office of Labor Standards has a duty to investigate violations of labor law.

**PUBLIC FORUM
WITH KSHAMA SAWANT**

**END HATE CRIMES
AGAINST THE LGBTQ
COMMUNITY!**

ALL PILGRIMS CHRISTIAN CHURCH
7:00 PM | March 3 | 500 Broadway E

THERE HAS BEEN A SURGE IN HATE
CRIMES ON CAPITOL HILL.

WE NEED REAL, CONCRETE SOLUTIONS.

JOIN SEATTLE CITY COUNCILMEMBER
KSHAMA SAWANT AT A
COMMUNITY MEETING.

JOIN THIS STRUGGLE!

Questions? Contact Adam Ziemkowski:
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206-684-8256

“In our city, 54 percent of black children live in poor households, compared to 6 percent of white children. **Black people in Seattle face higher unemployment, worse schools, fewer good jobs and decreased services compared to white counterparts,**” Councilmember Kshama Sawant explained at this year’s Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. march. She continued, “We need action. Black lives matter!”



Programs like YouthCare’s YouthBuild have the power to change young people’s lives for the better.



\$200M for Youth Jobs, Not Youth Jail Cells!

In spite of a growing protest movement by civil rights and community organizations like the NAACP, Ending the Prison Industrial Complex (EPIC), and Youth Undoing Institutional Racism (YUIR), the Seattle City Council and King County Council recently voted to move forward with plans to build a \$200 million new youth jail.

Councilmember Kshama Sawant was the only city official to vote NO on the youth jail. Noting that Seattle invests just \$5 million on all youth jobs programs combined, Sawant argued that the \$200 million should go to jobs programs rather than jail cells. She asked **Xia Frazier**, who participates in a local youth jobs program, what

she thought.

How do job training opportunities help in our community? How are they helping you?

Xia: I’m enrolled in a job program called **YouthCare’s YouthBuild**, which helps young people work toward their high school diplomas or GEDs while working full time, building affordable housing for low-income and homeless people in our communities. It has taught me construction skills to get a career. But it has also taught me the importance of unions, political activism, how to deal with racism and sexism, how to avoid police brutality, and how to rebuild myself and my community. It has changed my life and given me a second chance!

If you were on the City Council,

would you have voted NO on the Youth Jail?

Xia: Hell yes! Why build a youth jail? Job training programs work. They prevent young people from going to jail in the first place. \$200 million for youth jobs would transform our communities in a way that would last 100 years!



Municipal Broadband Now!

Seattle is a city world renowned for its technological innovation, yet our internet service is slow and expensive. This bitter irony is lost on no one. The problem is that two mega corporations – Comcast and CenturyLink – have virtual monopoly control.

Municipal Broadband would solve the problem. The city could save people hundreds of dollars per year by providing truly high speed, low cost internet.

Councilmember Sawant, as Chair of the City Energy Committee, will be working hard to push this issue forward in 2015.

About KSHAMA

As a member of the Seattle City Council, Kshama Sawant is a voice for workers, youth, and the oppressed. Kshama only accepts the average worker’s wage and donates the rest of her six-figure salary to building social justice movements. Kshama is the only member of the City Council who refuses any corporate donations and is independent of the Democratic Party political establishment that has run Seattle for decades. Kshama is a member of Socialist Alternative, which is in solidarity with the Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI), a socialist organization that fights with working class people on every continent across the world. For more visit www.SocialistAlternative.org
Volunteer | Donate | www.KshamaSawant.org