

## **SEIU Local 140 Newsletter 12.22.23**

### **Take Action!**

- Sign our [strike pledge!](#)
- Sign the PFSP [petition](#) “Tell PPS: No More Contract Violations and Unfair Treatment!”
- Join our exec team meeting Jan 6 at 1pm on [zoom](#).
- Next bargaining session Jan 12, 1-5pm, PEC (501 N Dixon St.)
- Membership meeting Jan 13 at 12pm, location TBD.

## **Union Updates**

### **Disaster Pay Update**

Last February, custodians were left to fend for themselves after a snowstorm that was far worse than had been predicted. Instead of getting a light snow as was forecasted, the storm ended up being the highest snowfall total for a single day in decades. As teachers and other staff headed home, many getting stuck with other commuters in the evening commute, custodians were alone in figuring out what to do, how long to stay at work, and how to get home. Most didn't have anyone from management reach out to make sure they were okay. Some walked home in the freezing cold and snow while others were stranded with their cars.

After filing a grievance against the district, we ended up surveying members for their expenses and then sent a total to Genevieve Rough, Senior Director of Employee and Labor Relations for the district. Rough had previously stated that the district would be willing to compensate members. We sent the amount from our survey to Rough, who has yet to reply months later and after numerous emails and phone calls to her office. At the same time, the district has refused to change the language in our contract that would give us hazard pay in situations such as these. You can call Genevieve Rough at (971) 678-6302, to demand that she make good on her offer to reimburse custodians for travel costs and damages during February's snowstorm

### **Nominations for Union Leadership**

Voting for our new sublocal executive board will begin in February. If you would like to nominate yourself or a coworker for a leadership position in our union, you can do that [here!](#) If you want to learn more about the different leadership roles and the election process, SEIU is offering a [webinar](#) from 10-12 on January 6. Your current executive board is composed of Amy Silvia, Jim D'Arcy, Roberta Packer, Gabe Penk, and Keenan Murray. You can also reach out to your current representatives if you have additional questions.

## **Local Solidarity**

### **PFSP Rallies at PPS Headquarters**

PFSP held a rally at the PEC district headquarters Tuesday evening to deliver a [petition](#) with a list of demands to HR relating to being asked to work on previously unscheduled days due to the changes made to the school year calendar following the teachers' strike. Their three main demands are incentive pay at time and a half for all days worked the week of 12/18 to 12/22, that a planning day in the 3rd quarter be made a paid day for all PFSP members, and that two optional non-student work days be added for certain members of the bargaining unit during which participating workers will be paid overtime.

While PPS hasn't offered any additional pay for PFSP members working this week, they have offered time and a half pay to substitute teachers who they are relying on to fill in for teachers who already had plans for this week. The added work days are a measure to prevent workers from having to rush to complete tasks at the end of the year that can only happen when students aren't in the building. The petition concludes by expressing solidarity with all of the other unions in the district: PAT, SEIU, ATU, and DCU, as well as non-represented workers, and denounces the union busting strategy of PPS. Let's continue to build connections with our PFSP comrades! An injury to one is an injury to all!

### **City Government Will Change in 2024**

In 2022 Portland voters passed Measure 26-228, a package of changes to the city government that would have to be put in place by November 2024. Every 10 years an independent body of volunteers known as the Charter Commission is convened to evaluate the city's charter, a document similar to a constitution, and propose changes. This Charter Commission recommended a number of significant changes that were enacted in law when voters passed Measure 26-228, including the following. The city will hire a city administrator to oversee the operations of bureaus which are currently managed by individual commissioners, theoretically freeing them to focus more on policy rather than the daily functioning of city agencies. The mayor will still be elected by a citywide vote, but will be a separate office instead of counting as a seat on the City Council. The City Council will be expanded to 12 members, with 3 each from 4 geographic districts. The voting will also use a method known as ranked choice voting where one ranks candidates by preference rather than simply casting a vote for one individual. The Portland Mercury has good [coverage](#) of the city council elections including information about candidates who have decided to run so far. As this process continues, look for more updates about how this restructuring may impact workers.

### **Arke Management Dumps Union Janitorial Company**

Our sibling local SEIU 49 is fighting against the recent decision of Arke Management to terminate their contract with a unionized janitorial company ABM/Able in favor of a non-union contractor. This eliminates 5 union positions who clean the "Brewery Blocks," a lucrative 5-block development of retail,

office, and residential units in the Pearl district which is owned by [JP Morgan](#). You can sign the [petition](#) demanding that Arke Management contract with a union janitorial company to ensure workers have access to health insurance, vacation, and a voice in their workplace.

## **International Solidarity**

### **The Case for Labor Solidarity with Palestine**

As Israel's genocidal bombardment of Gaza continues, killing more than [20,000 Palestinians](#) since October 7th, workers around the world continue to speak out and demand an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. Recently, SEIU 1021 in Northern California adopted a [resolution](#) calling for a ceasefire as well as an end to US military aid to Israel and an end to the continued occupation of Palestine. The resolution notes that, "since World War II, Israel has been the largest overall recipient of US foreign military aid, receiving over \$150 billion since 1946, and Biden's proposed \$14.3 billion in additional aid for Israel will take funding from the essential jobs we perform and services we provide as public sector employees." It also acknowledges the calls from Palestinian trade unions for international worker solidarity, which included a [global strike](#) on December 11.

Meanwhile, as more labor organizations join international calls for a ceasefire, much of the media is attempting to construe criticism of Israel and support for Palestinian liberation as antisemitic. [Rachel Saslow](#) with the Willamette Week has written multiple articles about PAT which conflate calls for a ceasefire with antisemitism. Even congress recently passed a [resolution](#) which states that anti-zionism is antisemitism. It is true that antisemitism is on the rise and must be opposed, yet organizations like [Jewish Voice for Peace](#) clearly differentiate between opposition to [zionism](#), (a political ideology that demands the ethnic cleansing of Palestine for an apartheid nation-state with exclusive rights for Jews above others), and antisemitism, which is the hatred and discrimination toward Jews because of their religion.

In fact, many of Israel's most vocal supporters including [Trump](#) and Elon Musk themselves espouse dangerous antisemitic ideas. It is critical to denounce escalating attacks and violence towards Jews, and some are [pointing out](#) that Israel's own actions are antisemitic for attempting to associate a religion with a violent settler-colonial state. Israel's actions in Gaza are in fact putting their own citizens at risk as evidenced by the [killing](#) of three Israeli hostages by IDF soldiers, despite the hostages being unarmed, shirtless, and waving a white flag.

SEIU staff and members have created a [petition](#) calling on SEIU leadership to stand with Palestine and call for an end to the genocide.

### **Danish Dock Workers Take Action Against Tesla**

In the midst of an ongoing labor dispute that has spread to multiple countries, Danish dockworkers and truck drivers are [refusing](#) to transport Teslas bound for Sweden. As coordination between unions spreads

and Tesla continues to push an anti-union stance, the company may have to take the defensive. Tesla CEO Elon Musk has consistently spread anti-worker rhetoric while continuing to provide a platform for misinformation on X, the website formerly known as Twitter.

## **Transport Workers Strike in Philippines**

Workers with the transit union PISTON are [on strike](#) in the Philippines in response to President Marcos Jr's "Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program." Due to limited public transit infrastructure, many commuters in cities like Manila rely on small buses known as jeepneys which employ over 600,000 drivers nationwide. The modernization program will phase out jeepneys and put the transit system in control of large corporations while forcing thousands of drivers out of work and creating a public transportation crisis. The National Union Rail Maritime and Transport Workers of the United Kingdom has also expressed [solidarity](#) with striking jeepney drivers.

## **Guest Editorial**

We are highlighting this piece by a fellow custodian reflecting on the past year of bargaining:

In a few weeks we will head into mediation, hoping the state will help us settle certain contract articles that haven't been agreed to. We all will have to wait until a tentative agreement has been reached for all members to decide if we approve it. PFSP has turned down their tentative agreement twice. So we must be absolutely sure of how our future contract unfolds, and if we are willing to accept it.

Let's go back to almost a year ago, and why we are here in this situation. Before contract talks began we had to figure out what was important. We looked at past contracts, and how we can right the wrongs that were created since the 2007 contract. That contract itself stripped away what the custodians had created before it was thrown out in 2002 when the custodians were fired. Since 2007 we never had a fair contract, because the district became owners of our contract. As long as the district still has control of the collective bargaining contract it will be a constant battle for them not letting go.

Language needs to be changed. Seniority rights need to be enforced, and we are in need of better training methods for those who want to advance and get a better opportunity. It is still true that management will do what they can to stay in charge. In the collective bargaining meetings the district has no intention to be compatible to compromise in order to create solutions. They simply didn't want to negotiate. They wanted to keep the contract as is. As long as the district wants total control it makes it much harder to let it go.

Their tactics of trying to convince state lawmakers to get rid of the civil service rights only to have it turned down by the legislature. The bullying of employees by trying to make them quit or terminating them from employment. The sexual harassment, moving custodians to 2 or 3 different schools within one year. Creating mental health issues and uncomfortable working environments.

Let's look at last summer at the training fair. Showing films about being like predators at the workplace will make us hungry to work harder. There is very little trust between employees and employers.

The district ignored the teachers' union. The November strike was a warning to the district that enough is enough. It's not only about fair treatment in the workplace, but about taking responsibility for our working conditions. Rats, heat, the treatment of special education kids.

As the teachers returned, the blame game of not having enough money continued. Complaining to the state. Getting a reply from them saying it doesn't work that way.

I think Guerrero was smart by deciding to step down. Besides the lies and manipulation I think he realized that the district has no sense within itself. The school board's right wing extremism. Trying to blame all unions for the district's problems. Creating an out of control environment. If the district was a business it would've folded many years ago, and none of us would be employed here.

Whether you decide to sign the strike pledge or not, all of us will have to make that final decision to accept a TA when it is settled. We have to be brave for whatever circumstances we are dealt. Teachers have our backs. PFSP has had enough. DCU is in bargaining. Reality and wisdom are in our hands.