

SEIU Local 140 Newsletter 12.31.23

Take Action!

- [Nominate](#) yourself or a coworker for a leadership role in our union!
- 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.
- [Petition](#) SEIU to call for an end to the genocide in Palestine

Union Updates

Looking Back at 2023

This year has seen our union take on the school district on many fronts while building solidarity with the other unions in the district such as PAT, PFSP and DCU, as well as creating solidarity with broader struggles for labor and justice around our region and internationally.

In February we began bargaining with the district on a platform including starting wages of \$25 an hour for all positions, bringing nutrition service workers up to the same levels of pay as custodians, healthcare for part-time workers, better protections for working during inclement weather or other hazardous conditions and more. February also saw a severe snowstorm that occurred unexpectedly during the work day, stranding commuters and leaving custodians to figure out how to get home safely. Many ended up getting stuck or paying for expensive uber rides with no guidance from the district as far as safety protocols. In response, we launched a [campaign](#) demanding hazard pay for custodians who faced dangerous conditions coming to work during the extreme weather event. In March we held a rally to deliver our grievance and attempt to speak with HR.

In July, custodian Malak Elkher quit during a board meeting and gave a speech explaining the [harassment](#) she had faced and the district's mishandling of the situation. Following her testimony, other workers began to come forward and share their stories of harassment and discrimination at work in addition to facing retaliation from HR after speaking up. Along with PAT and PFSP, we delivered a joint list of [demands](#) in September calling for justice and accountability for all victims of harassment and retaliation at PPS.

As contract negotiations stalled, we held a [rally](#) in August to demand that the district bargain with us in good faith. We collected hundreds of signatures on petitions to the board and members have spoken repeatedly at board meetings despite the union comment period repeatedly pushed to the very end of the agenda. Members have also joined the bargaining team during negotiations to show support for our bargaining demands.

SEIU members stood in solidarity with educator Brian Chu who was fired at a public meeting after repeatedly speaking out against environmental racism and systemic racism at PPS. Various union members, community members and former students of Chu showed up to pack the meeting and send a message that the district can't silence dissent.

In October we gathered with members of other unions in the district to hold a practice picket in preparation for the PAT strike which began at the beginning of November and lasted until the end of the month. Our members showed up at the picket lines and rallies held at various locations to show our collective resolve to stand up to the systemic inequities in our education system.

Since February 10th we have participated in 20 bargaining sessions and reached tentative agreements on a number of articles in our contract. However, due to a failure to resolve our most pressing items, we requested [mediation](#) on November 3rd. Our next bargaining date is January 12th and we continue to push the district for living wages, hazard pay, and other key demands.

Along the way we expressed solidarity with workers at the City of Portland, Providence, New Seasons, Kaiser, with seafarers at Portland ports, as well as with workers in the Philippines struggling against a repressive and anti-worker regime. Throughout the year, our newsletter and social media have attempted to keep members informed and aware of ways to get involved. We welcome your feedback and input and hope to see even more members get involved this coming year!

Local Solidarity

ILWU Local 5 Powell's Books Workers Settle Contract

Powell's Books workers represented by ILWU Local 5 recently reached an [agreement](#) with the company after bargaining since February this year. The new contract will be effective at the beginning of January and will last until 2028. It will bring an increased starting wage of \$17 an hour for entry-level positions and wages will go up \$5.20 an hour through the four year contract for all workers in the union. International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 5 was founded by Powell's Books workers in 1999 and has since [grown](#) to include preschool workers, vet techs and workers at the Oregon Historical Society, among others. The ILWU has a history of labor militancy including port shutdowns around the Occupy Wall Street movement as well as refusing to handle certain shipments in solidarity with the people of Palestine.

NSLU Expands, Majority of New Seasons Stores Unionized

The New Seasons Labor Union (NSLU) has [expanded](#) to include the Sellwood and Williams stores meaning a majority of locations are now unionized. If you're able, you can donate to the NSLU [strike fund](#) to show solidarity! The Sellwood location had previously voted against unionizing by a narrow margin. NSLU began in 2017 as an independent labor union and has faced firm opposition from the

supposedly “progressive” corporation. On Saturday December 30th the Woodstock, Seven Corners and Grant Park locations held strikes for part of the day to protest unfair labor practices by the company.

Portland Mercury: The Year in Labor

Check out this [summary](#) of the year’s labor struggles in our area from the Portland Mercury! Along with the teachers strike, city laborers went on strike, and many independent unions in the Portland area such as the NSLU held numerous actions. Let’s continue to build momentum and connect with other workers!

PGE Raises Rates 18%

Portland General Electric is set to raise [rates](#) for electricity by 18% starting January 1st after the Oregon Public Utility [Commission](#) approved its request for the rate hike. The commission is supposed to help represent the public in ensuring safe and affordable utilities by regulating private monopolies like electric, gas, and telephone companies. However, hasty approval of these unprecedented rate hikes raise questions about whose interests the commission really represents. These rate hikes also come in the wake of increasing concerns over PGE's dangerous [neglect](#) of their infrastructure. Meanwhile, PGE CEO Maria Pope made over \$6 million in 2022.

International Solidarity

Jeepney Drivers Strike

A massive transportation crisis is looming in urban areas in the Philippines if the unpopular Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program goes into effect January 1st. The program will lead to the displacement and elimination of small jeepney drivers and operators, benefiting big corporations while jeopardizing the livelihood of 64,000 drivers nationwide and 25,000 operators in the National Capital Region alone. Jeepney drivers already held a [week-long strike](#) earlier this year, and are planning to strike again if the Marcos government does not cancel its PUV modernization program.

The International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines (ICHRP) is calling on workers in the US to stand in [solidarity](#) with striking jeepney drivers in the Philippines by mobilizing moral and material support! You can donate to the transport strike fund through ICHRP at tinyurl.com/strike-fund23

Nike Announces Massive Layoffs Despite Record Profits

Despite making \$22 billion in profits out of a total revenue of \$51 billion in fiscal year 2023, Beaverton headquartered sportswear giant Nike is announcing [\\$2 billion](#) worth of cuts over the next 3 years including layoffs. Meanwhile, Nike’s CEO John Donahoe made [\\$32 million](#) last fiscal year.

Nike has a long history of avoiding [local](#) and [state](#) taxes and bullying the state legislature to get its way. Nike is also [infamous](#) for its use of sweatshop labor in countries like [Indonesia](#), China, and Pakistan where it manufactures its shoes and apparel for mere pennies while selling finished products for enormous profits. More recently, Nike has also faced [protests](#) over \$2.2 million of stolen wages from garment workers in Cambodia and Thailand.

Nike profits off the cheap labor of millions of workers around the globe while making billions in profit, but repeatedly shows that it is unwilling to fairly compensate its workers or pay its fair share in taxes. As giant corporations like Google, Intel, and Goldman Sachs [announce major cuts](#) and layoffs in order to protect and increase their profits, it will always be their workers who will pay the price. We can see parallels with these corporate layoffs in how PPS and other ostensibly public school districts force workers to shoulder the burden of inadequate funding. Interestingly, Julia Brim Edwards, currently the longest serving member of the school board, only recently [retired](#) from a role as senior director of government and public affairs for Nike.

Just as major corporations refuse to share their enormous profits with the people who actually make their products, school districts prioritize spending on admin and private contracts rather than their workers. Instead of cutting administrative salaries or severing expensive contracts with private curriculum, software, legal, and architectural firms, they force their lowest paid workers to, in the words of Andrew Scott, make the “sacrifice.” Similarly, rather than increasing taxes on corporations which benefit from publicly funded infrastructure and an educated workforce, our legislature chooses to fund education at insufficient levels. It is up to us as workers to organize together so that we can demand the fair pay and quality schools we, and all students deserve.

Thousands Protest Deregulation And Privatization in Argentina

In recent weeks, thousands have taken to the streets in Argentina to [protest](#) drastic cuts and massive deregulation efforts proposed by far-right President Javier Milei. Now unions are calling for a general strike on January 24. Milei is attempting to scrap nearly 350 regulations while privatizing over 40 public companies and threatening to suspend social services to protestors as well as enact laws to limit the right to assembly. Milei has so far enjoyed [support](#) from the Biden administration. Argentina holds some of the world's largest reserves of lithium, crucial in the manufacture of batteries for [electric cars](#). The South American country has been trapped in billions of dollars of debt due to loans from the US-dominated International Monetary Fund which has contributed to widespread suffering from extreme triple digit inflation.