

## **SEIU Local 140 Newsletter 2.15.23**

### **Membership outreach phone banking**

Join us this Monday 2/20 at noon at 133 SE Madison St. to phone bank together and connect more with our union membership. We will spend time calling members to hear their concerns and update them on the bargaining process. After, we can spend some time debriefing and sharing what we learned. Pizza lunch will be provided!

### **Bargaining update**

The bargaining team met with management on Friday 2/10 to set ground rules before officially starting to bargain our new contract. Even though we had asked for a room with projectors and windows that open for ventilation, the district packed us into a small windowless room with no projector and inadequate power outlets.

Unfortunately we were not able to come to agreement on ground rules at this first session. We pushed to get bargaining sessions recorded, alternate meetings between mornings and afternoons, require masks when in windowless rooms, receive travel pay to get to bargaining, and have 1 hour of union caucus time before bargaining sessions. However, the district's attorney was not interested in accommodating any of these basic requests. We are meeting with the district next on 2/27 to continue our discussion on ground rules.

### **Budgeting Priorities**

PPS has continually warned of a more restrictive budget, due to less state funding from enrollment decreases across its schools, especially when insisting the difficulty of bettering staff pay for custodians or teachers. Custodian positions—although indeed continuing to fill up—still remain at 20 openings as of this week. Special education is struggling even more so; 41 positions are unfilled, most of which are for para educators whose working conditions are strongly affected by the severe understaffing that places pressure on all those currently working the position.

Yet, the district has chosen to prioritize filling all possible positions in their administrative communication team. The new budget of this team is at [\\$2.3 million](#): over double compared to similarly sized districts such as Beaverton and Salem-Keizer, who both spend just a little over \$1 million each on theirs. And in general, six figure salaries in the PPS central office have jumped by 44% since 2017, noted by Angela Bonilla, president of the Portland Association of Teachers (PAT). These disparities call into question the priorities of our district management with which jobs they deem most essential to focus already limited school funding into.

### **The Dangerous Consequences of “Cutting Costs”**

On February 3rd, 2023, 50 cars owned by Norfolk Southern derailed in East Palestine, Ohio. The cars on this derailed train were hauling toxic, hazardous, and explosive chemicals, all of which began pouring and burning into the soil, air, and water. Residents were immediately evacuated as their air grew thick with hydrochloric acid and likely several carcinogens. People impacted have [reported](#) the air smelling and tasting like paint thinner, bloodshot eyes, headaches, nausea, difficulty breathing, and death of animals and livestock. The team responsible for cleanup is instead letting the chemicals burn out in the open, grossly misusing the term “controlled release”. These chemicals are spilling into the Ohio River, responsible for providing drinking water to roughly [5 million](#) people. [Journalists](#) attempting to report on the incident, and concerned [residents](#) trying to save their pets, have been beaten and detained by local police.

This accident was preventable and is a direct result of maximizing profits; the rail industry has been cutting costs in labor, removing workers' right to sick days and a consistent schedule, reducing training, and laxing on safety inspections. In the case of this derailment, Norfolk Southern purposely chose to not label the train as carrying hazardous materials to rush it along faster. Additionally, the car [inspection](#) time has gone down from roughly 3 minutes a car to 90 seconds per car, explaining why nobody noticed the issue with the axle—ultimately leading to the derailment. Despite raking in [\\$4.8 Billion](#) in profits, in part from the very practices that caused this, they just can't seem to bother covering the costs of the damage.

As rail workers across the entire country ramped up to strike last fall to demand improved health and safety measures—measures that could've prevented this explosion—Biden and Congress instead forced through the company's tentative contract that rail workers had rejected. Yet, Norfolk Southern is now instead putting the blame on engineers and inspectors: anything to avoid responsibility for the incalculable damage and serious long-term consequences resulting from their negligence. Bosses will always find a way to blame the workers for their crimes against humanity.

## Coming Up

- Sign our [petition](#) for higher wages to show our unity as we begin bargaining
- [Nominate](#) yourself or a coworker for secretary/treasurer and custodial rep at large
- [Sign up](#) for an online steward training Saturday 2/18 from 9am-noon
- Join our phone banking event Monday 2/20 at noon at 133 SE Madison St. (Enter from loading dock on 2nd Ave.)
- Online international labor solidarity event with workers from the Philippines Thursday 2/23 at 5:30pm. Register at [tinyurl.com/labor-sol](https://tinyurl.com/labor-sol)

## Useful Links

Union instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/seiulocal140/>

Our contract: [SEIU 140 union contract](#)

SEIU 140 webpage: <https://seiu503.org/pps/>

Local labor news: <https://nwlaborpress.org/>