

# SEIU Local 140 Newsletter 7.14.23

## Take Action!

- Sign our [bargaining platform petition](#)
- [Support Malak](#) as she continues to fight for justice for all victims of sexual harassment at PPS
- Attend bargaining during any of the following scheduled bargaining sessions:
  - Friday 7/28 from 9-5 at the union office (525 NE Oregon St.)
  - Friday 8/4 from 9-5 location TBD
- Rally and board meeting Tuesday 8/8 at 5pm at the PEC/district building (501 N Dixon St.)
- Membership meeting Saturday 8/12 at noon. Location TBD

## Union Updates

### Sexual Harassment at PPS a Widespread Problem

This week at the school board meeting Malak Elkher, a custodian, [testified](#) about the abusive and unsafe working conditions she experienced in just her first month. She discussed enduring sexual harassment from two coworkers and a manager, and how the misogynist work environment wasn't addressed despite reporting the harassment to HR. She ended her testimony by turning in her badge and keys because she was unwilling to put up with the continued harassment which made it impossible for her to continue to do her job.

Veronica Green and Gabe Penk testified about the continued harassment workers have experienced, and made a compelling case that the district has failed to take the necessary steps to keep workers safe. They communicated the union's demands that PPS follow its own sexual harassment policy to protect their workers and provide thorough and meaningful in-person sexual harassment prevention training. They also demanded an independent audit into the district's compliance with state and federal law concerning workplace harassment.

Multiple news channels attended the board meeting and have covered the story including [KOIN](#), [KATU](#), and [KPTV](#). A longtime teacher is also [filing a lawsuit](#) regarding sexual harassment, retaliation, and a hostile work environment. PPS has declined to be interviewed by the press and has only offered a statement in which they claim, "the district is deeply committed to fostering and maintaining a safe and respectful environment for all our employees."

On Thursday, Genevieve Rough, Senior Director of Employee and Labor Relations, sent a sternly worded response to the executive and bargaining teams in reply to an email which they sent to the board the week before. She concluded the email by stating that "Your continued failure to identify the matters that you claim are unresolved or resulted in employees being fired suggests that you care more about publicity and sowing division between SEIU members and the District than you care about the safety and well-being of the staff who have made complaints." To suggest claims of sexual harassment have been made for "publicity" is insulting and dismissive to these serious grievances on the part of workers. It's absurd to claim that Local 140 is somehow "sowing division" when it is the district which tolerates widespread workplace harassment and has refused to meet nearly all of our bargaining demands so far.

It is clear that sexual harassment is a major issue at PPS. If you have experienced sexual harassment and you feel safe doing so, you should report it to HR by sending an email to [hrlegal@pps.net](mailto:hrlegal@pps.net). If you do not feel safe reporting it to the district, reach out to someone you trust in our union. In all cases, we always encourage you to reach out to a union steward. You can call, text, leave a message, or email with any of the following stewards:

*Veronica Green* - 415 730 9059  
[veronica.green68@gmail.com](mailto:veronica.green68@gmail.com)

*Gabe Penk* - 503 862 3692  
[gabepenk@gmail.com](mailto:gabepenk@gmail.com)

*Aubz Headrick* - 330 715 1599  
[aubreymheadrick@gmail.com](mailto:aubreymheadrick@gmail.com)

*Jennifer Borley* - 503 341 4183  
[jenniferborley79@gmail.com](mailto:jenniferborley79@gmail.com)

### **Teamsters UPS Workers Move Closer to Strike**

Teamsters workers are moving closer to a strike after talks with UPS [broke down](#) and the corporation refused to provide another offer to meet critical demands. Corporate media [articles](#) have continued to focus on the impact that a potential strike could have on consumers, supply chains and the economy as a whole instead of examining the larger class dynamics at play. Such analyses attempt to sow division between striking workers and society at large by portraying strikes as selfish and normalizing corporate greed that has created the problem in the first place. The “health of the economy” is an abstract concept that does not care for the health of people or whether their needs are met. Let’s support our fellow workers as they prepare to go on strike! Stay tuned for more information about how to support Teamsters UPS workers here in Portland.

### **Climate Crisis Continues, Fossil Fuel Extraction Keeps Booming**

As the climate crisis deepens, Vermont saw extreme [flooding](#) that severely damaged infrastructure and left parts of major cities underwater. Meanwhile, this June was the [hottest](#) ever recorded according to data from NOAA. In the coming days, the Southwestern US is predicted to see a serious heat wave as part of a [heat dome](#) event similar to what the Pacific Northwest endured in the summer of 2021. As the signs of global heating continue, the Biden administration has approved new fossil fuel extraction such as the Willow Project in Alaska, while failing to reduce existing emissions from militarism and corporate industry that are the primary culprits for the global crisis.

To name only one more example out of many, the Rio Grande LNG [project](#) in Texas recently secured funding. A proposed facility for exporting fracked “natural” gas, the terminal would harm local ecosystems, Indigenous nations and communities of color. As we face the district in our contract negotiations and other unions continue to struggle locally, nationally and internationally as part of broader movements, we must make connections with the environmental movement and acknowledge the dire future of the planet. The Gulf Coast is already studded with toxic sites for the extraction,

refining, storage and transportation of oil and gas, contributing to major ecological harm and adverse health outcomes for those who live in the vicinity of these facilities.