

SEIU Local 140 Newsletter 8.19.23

Take Action!

- Attend our next bargaining session Friday 9/1 at 1pm at the SEIU building
- File an OSHA [complaint](#) if PPS doesn't take appropriate [actions](#) during hot conditions. Note that even if conditions aren't extremely hot in all buildings, the district has an obligation to monitor the heat index, and communicate the steps that they are taking to protect workers.
- Next membership meeting will be Saturday 9/9 at noon, location TBD.

Union Updates

District Response to Heatwave Symptomatic of Larger Issues

Heat is a serious concern in the majority of sites across the district that lack air conditioning. At the beginning of this week, facilities director Frank Leavitt sent out an email with an attachment explaining the district's plan for hot weather in accordance with OSHA regulations that were enacted following the devastating heat dome event in the summer of 2021. Despite sharing this information with workers, it is unclear whether the district is truly in compliance with the regulations. They are required to monitor temperatures and also communicate with workers when temperatures reach certain thresholds. As the climate continues to change, heat protections will only become more necessary. Had this heatwave occurred during the school year, it's not clear what would have happened.

As [Ryan Healy](#) from the District Council of Unions has spoken about, there is a growing overall maintenance backlog in our buildings, not to mention the necessary improvements to make them viable in this age of climate disaster. Though we work in the public sector, the actual public made up of workers, students, and parents have limited power to ensure these necessities in our schools. Instead we have corporate-like structures that undermine our democratic rights including a school board that functions like a corporate board of directors that prioritizes saving money over serving the public. At board meetings where decisions are made affecting the entire school system, public comment is extremely limited and board meetings have recently been scaled back to only once a month. Instead of actively seeking out the input and demands of students, workers, and the community, board members force us to beg for the opportunity to speak directly to decision makers, and then rarely act on our demands. This is especially clear with the example of our recent demands for an independent audit into sexual harassment at PPS. Instead of acting on our demands, the district hired an investigator who has represented PPS in arbitration cases against labor. How can she be considered "independent?" Overt overlaps between the public school and the private for-profit sector also include people like board member [Julia Brim-Edwards](#), who was previously a lobbyist for Nike.

These corporate practices such as privatization, cost cutting, and subcontracting have created schools unequipped for extreme heat and other climate disasters, let alone appropriate places for learning. These profit-driven schemes are the same that are responsible for the climate crisis in the first place! The

process of privatization both prevents preparation for climate change while also worsening it, making it critical for us to stand up and demand our democratic rights, especially in supposedly public institutions like PPS.

Local Solidarity

PFSP Update

Portland Federation of School Professionals (PFSP) is currently in bargaining with PPS as well as PAT and SEIU. The District Coalition of Unions (DCU) representing trades is still waiting for the district to set an initial date to begin bargaining. On Thursday 8/17, PFSP met with management and expected to hear back about their wage proposal which includes demands for a minimum starting wage of \$25/hr. Instead of offering their wage proposal, the district's lawyer Dan Rowan acknowledged that they are still working on drafting a proposal but shared that "the board really wants to see us get all positions to \$20/hr." He failed to acknowledge the union's clear demand for \$25/hr and followed that by stating, "it's also expensive, you know, the district has a budget, and so we're trying to work within that."

You can view the recording of the latest PFSP bargaining session [here](#) with the password: &aOhym=7 Although PAT and PFSP can record their bargaining session, the district refused to allow us to do the same.

ILWU Local 5 Workers to Strike on Labor Day

ILWU Local 5 Powell's books employees will go on a one day strike on Labor Day and will be picketing the store. The company has apparently failed to offer a living wage despite rising inflation and Portland becoming increasingly unaffordable. They are asking people to not cross the picket line and not shop at any Powell's locations on online on September 4th. You can donate to their [strike](#) fund or sign their [petition](#).

New Seasons Workers Hold Rally

Workers from the New Seasons Labor Union and their supporters held a rally on Monday August 14th at the New Seasons central office. The union has been negotiating with the grocery chain since January and has noted the company's refusal to agree to proposals and efforts to repress worker organizing. After listening to speakers outside the building, those assembled delivered a memorandum regarding the corporation's attendance policy to the headquarters. Currently the following New Seasons's stores are unionized: Grant Park, Seven Corners, Concordia, Slabtown, Hawthorne, Cedar Hills, Arbor Lodge and Woodstock. You can donate to support the NSLU [here](#).

International Solidarity

UAW Workers Move Closer to Strike

UAW auto workers are set to vote on whether to authorize a strike next week, as negotiations with Ford, General Motors and Stellantis, the parent company of Chrysler and Jeep have reached an impasse. UAW president Shawn Fain, elected by a rank and file dissatisfied with past union bureaucrats who have compromised with capital, has been [defiant](#) as workers gear up for a strike. Along with asking for higher wages that amount to a 40 percent increase, he has also suggested that a 4 day 32 hour work week would improve the wellbeing of workers. The union president has been holding Facebook live streams in order to communicate what is going on with members, and he has invoked the history of the labor struggle numerous times. As with the Teamsters UPS strike that was narrowly avoided, this one would have massive impacts on the economy and a quick search for articles online will produce many stories from the corporate media complaining about a recent analysis estimating the “cost” to the economy from such a strike to be over \$5 billion. It’s worth discussing once again that the health of the economy has nothing to do with the welfare of the poor and working class. Economic gains simply flow to the owning and employing classes despite labor producing all wealth. It’s critical to resist these arguments about strikes hurting the “health” of an economy that doesn’t have interest in healthy living conditions for all. In fact the incessant complaints about damage to the "economy" only stand as a testament to the fears of the owners about the decisive power of a UAW strike, which could win substantial gains for the working class and create an economy that is better for everyday people.