



September
2008

Amalgamated Transit Union Local #1576 Newsletter

President's Report by Kathleen Custer, President/B.A.

As usual, this month has been another busy month with a number of meetings on the weekends that simply could not be done throughout the normal work week.

On Saturday September 13th, our union hosted a very successful shop steward training. We had a combination of over 22 new and seasoned shop stewards attend. I had planned on assisting our Vice President Rick Jurkovic in conducting the training but asked a good friend of mine and long time 'shop steward trainer' Judy Young from Local 587 to assist so that I could attend the grand opening of the 112th Street Park and Ride held the same day. Although I could only stay for the first two hours, I was very impressed to see how many of our members were interested in becoming involved in the union as shop stewards. I think it was the best turnout I've seen yet! Rick did a terrific job with his first training session and we're looking forward to the next one.

When I arrived at the Grand Opening of the park and ride, I was disappointed to see there was no one in attendance from Community Transit. Though I did see Assistant Manager Mike Winters from First Transit and we spoke a while about our successes in the Sound Transit Route 532 and thanked him again for all their support on behalf of our membership. It made me proud to know that our ATU members are a part of the evolution of this growing community and that our living wage union jobs are key to this success!

Then last Saturday I along with our International Vice President Don Hansen and our Vice President Rick Jurkovic attended a meeting with a representative from a local school bus company where the drivers have been looking to organize with our union. They have had years of issues with the management of the company where they change policies, procedures working conditions- however they choose and seniority, *our* most important possession, mean nothing to management. There, you are an at-will employee where they can terminate you at *any* time for *any* reason. The drivers recognize the importance of a union and what a union can do for them and we are ready and willing to assist. We are in the preliminary stages of this process so I will keep you informed as we move forward.

Someone asked me recently what the "ATU" stands for. Amalgamated Transit Union is more than just three words, with the first being difficult for most people to pronounce! The ATU represents transit workers in the United States and Canada with over 185,000 members and 270 local unions in 46 US states and 9 provinces. Those 270 locals represent bus drivers, mechanics, clerical, light rail and dozens other classifications. The ATU stands for and stands-up for our union jobs and the interests of our membership. This is what I and the other union representatives strive to do. Can you imagine for a moment what it would be like without the union? Our wages, benefits, right to file a grievance- appeal discipline decisions, seniority rights, all of our protections- gone? So what does the ATU mean? The protections, benefits and rights we enjoy are what the Union stands for. As always, your support and solidarity mean everything- thank you. Be safe.

Kathleen M. Custer, President /BA

Vice President's Report by Rick Jurkovic

“Politics” by Vice President Rick Jurkovic

Haven't we all been taught that this is a subject like Religion that you're not supposed to talk about? Well, Brothers and Sisters welcome to the “Labor Movement”. The Labor Movement is the only movement besides the Civil Rights Movement who refers to themselves as “Brothers and Sisters”. The Labor Movement is also a force that comprises 20 percent of the workers in Washington State. Nationally, the figure is 13%. In the last newsletter I told you about the Snohomish County Labor Council and the Washington State Labor Council. Our Union By-Laws state that the Vice President is delegated to attend these councils. To put it simply, I am thrown into politics by virtue of the office you elected me into. Initially, ATU International endorsed Hillary Clinton and this year, for the first time I not only attended precinct caucuses but also ended up being elected as a delegate.

What I have discovered is that the labor movement is very political. Nationwide, Labor has specific issues that they stand behind like healthcare for all Americans and an end to the War in Iraq, to name just a few. Once Labor agrees on the issues then we look for the candidate who emerges that will stand behind those issues. Before I go any further, please don't think that I am telling you how to vote or what your political idealism should be. My intent is to merely tell you what the Labor Movement is all about and how they select their candidates. I encourage you to go to the websites for the Snohomish Count Labor Council (www.snolabor.org) and the Washington State Labor Council (www.WSLC.org) and check them out. They should have an updated list of candidates they recommend on their web sites.

Speaking of Politics, we owe a debt of gratitude to Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon. Recently, Community Transit could not come to terms with Sound Transit regarding the 532 route from Everett to Bellevue. Sound Transit is increasing service and is adding 10 coaches to compliment that increase. Since Community Transit and Sound Transit could not come to terms the Route 532 ended up going out for bid. What happened was that Veolia, a non Union company out of France won the bid. This is where your President, Kathleen Custer, came in, she was the only person who could have accomplished what she did and she couldn't do it alone. It involved the support of Aaron Reardon, who is “Labor Friendly”, her father, Lance Norton, President of Local 587 in King County and our attorney. Kathleen was reminiscent of Chris Gregoire, Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell in regards to the Air Force choosing Airbus for the Tankers rather than Boeing. The team went to the Sound Transit Board of Director's meeting and caused change. Veolia lost the bid, Community Transit and Sound Transit were compelled to come to terms regarding the 532 route. There is Federal Law which requires that where Federal funding exists, Union labor can't be replaced by non-Union workers. This illustrates how political powers coexist with Labor and Labor in turn supports these political powers. The more important issue is that even if only 10 Union jobs were saved it was worth the effort.

So the Labor Movement is the culmination of all the Unions United together and they drive politics by endorsing the candidates who support their issues. I do not intend to use this office to tell you how to vote, but I will share with you the endorsements of the Labor Movement and the issues upon which our candidates emerge. Brothers and Sisters, I hope you will check out the endorsements of the Labor Movement and above all I hope you exercise your right to vote in the November Election.

In Solidarity,
Rick M. Jurkovic

Many Thanks

I would like to thank each and every one of you for your confidence and vote during the election for Recording Secretary. I plan on continuing my involvement in the Union as one of your shop stewards and anything else that I can help with.

I think John Sainz will make a great Recording Secretary. After reading his minutes from our last union meeting in July, he seems very organized and I believe we are in good hands.

Thank You **all** again for your support and wonderful words of encouragement!!!

John, I wish you nothing but the best!!!

Sincerely,
Debra Laik

Negotiating for Healthcare Coverage **by Patty Ceis**

All of our members have medical coverage in some form. All of us know people who aren't as fortunate. I'll be eligible to retire at age 62, but won't be able to get Medicare until 65. So, I keep asking myself, what will I do for medical coverage if and when I retire, no matter what age? Take for example, my 88 year old mother who was a hard working tax payer until the age of 65, gets about \$800/ month in benefits, but pays out around \$200/month in a Medicare supplement, so, in essence, she's not really getting \$800/ month in benefits as intended

Realistic Run Times

Dear brothers and sisters as your safety committee representative I need your help. Since the books came out for the new shake-up I have looked through them and became quite disappointed. I am disappointed in the fact that the runs I was looking at showed a significant reduction in recovery time. Recovery time is that time between the ending of one route and the start of the next route. So I ask all of you to help me verify that certainty by submitting your run cards to me with actual times.

My plan is to submit all run cards with insufficient recovery time to the safety committee. I believe the recovery time is a key factor in providing safe service to our passengers. If there is insufficient recovery time for us to get out of the seat and stretch out our legs or take a walk for blood flow circulation purposes or go use the restroom or have a bite to eat to keep from going into a diabetic coma or pass out do to a lack of nutrients to the bodywell then something needs to be done about recovery time and I ask you to help me do just that.

In addition to your making notes to your run card I also ask you to take the time to get out of the seat after a trip and stretch your legs if you need to or use the restroom or eat if need be in order to be and feel safe to drive your next trip.

Should you find that a particular route you are driving has insufficient recovery time for you to do what you need to do to feel safe and you are more than six minutes down starting your next trip. Feel free to call in and say you are six or whatever time down do to "Driver Maintenance"

Speaking of calling in for being more than six minutes down per the SOP . The 3 common reasons to call in for being down more than six minutes. They are (1) traffic....commuter hours are the worst and means buses will not make the time points (2) customer service..... which includes waiting for passengers to get there fare together or sit down or maybe even having to secure a passenger in their mobility device. and the 3rd is Driver maintenance.

Make those notes and put them in my box so that I can present my case to the safety committee for better recovery time to the run cards. Remember "Individually we make a difference ,yet collectively we make an impact" Let us all work together in this collectively so we can make that impact

Peter Majkut
Safety Committee Member

Safety Committee Member

Letters to the Editor

One Member's Response to Joyce's Letter Regarding Contract Negotiations

Joyce Eleanor,

Every time there is a crisis, be it a winter storm, flood or other circumstance that requires the "Drivers" to go above and beyond, we do.

We do because we know that our passengers are depending on us. US! the Drivers, Supervisors, Dispatchers and the Mechanics to get them where they are going and/or keep them safe. After the crisis is over you pat everyone on the head and say good little boys and girls.

Come contract time your negotiation hacks offer a contract with take-aways and act as though "we", the Drivers, are the red-headed stepchild.

Please, DO NOT EVER AGAIN write to me at my home trying to circumvent the contract/ Labor negotiation process.

I/we have elected officials of the ATU representing my/our interests. Should you want to be part of the process, then you should be at the negotiation table, and offer a contract that respects and honors our efforts.

D.F. Noblick
ATU Represented Operator

Employee Free Choice Act by Neal Safrin (Neal is an Executive Board Officer from Local 587 and their Coordinator for Washington State Labor Council Labor-Neighbor Program. He is also a Member Education Coordinator for the Snohomish County Labor Council.)

The Employee Free Choice Act is the most important piece of legislation in 70 years. It is designed to ensure worker's freedom to form unions and bargain for better wages benefits and working conditions. Most people in this country assume that we already have this freedom. However, a new 2007 study affirms that illegal firings of activists has increased and is a significant factor in the overall decline in union membership. The system is broken and it will take a strong campaign from American working families and our elected representatives to fix it.

Starting at the end of the 1970s, American employers began to engage in the systematic and widespread use of illegal firings as a strategy to undermine the success of campaigns for union representation," reports the non-profit Center for Economic and Policy Research. Cornell University scholar Kate Bronfenbrenner studied hundreds of organizing campaigns and found that:

- Ninety-two percent of private-sector employers, when faced with employees who want to join together in a union, force employees to attend closed-door meetings to hear anti-union propaganda; 80 percent require supervisors to attend training sessions on attacking unions; and 78 percent require that supervisors deliver anti-union messages to workers they oversee.
 - Seventy-five percent hire outside consultants to run anti-union campaigns, often based on mass psychology and distorting the law.
 - Half of employers threaten to shut down partially or totally if employees join together in a union.
- In 25 percent of organizing campaigns, private-sector employers illegally fire workers because they want to form a union.

Even after workers successfully form a union, in one-third of the instances, employers do not negotiate a contract. Can you imagine a CEO agreeing to work without a contract that guarantees pay and benefits? It would never happen. But when companies prevent workers from forming unions, that's exactly what they're making employees do:

Joining together in a union to bargain for better wages, benefits and working conditions is the best opportunity that working people have to get ahead. Today, for many working families, good jobs are vanishing and health care coverage and retirement security are slipping out of reach. Only 38 percent of the public says their families are getting ahead financially and less than a quarter believes the next generation will be better off. But workers who belong to unions earn 30 percent more than nonunion workers. They are 62 percent more likely to have employer-provided health coverage and four times more likely to have pensions.

Is it any wonder that a powerful network of anti-union employers, conservative business associations, industry lobbying groups, and right-wing policy centers and policymakers are trying to shut down choice in the American workplace? At the same time, a growing, bipartisan coalition of policymakers supports the Employee Free Choice Act. Only a small handful of Senators prevented it from becoming law in 2008 by a filibuster. All workers should have the freedom to decide for themselves whether to form unions to bargain for a better life.

Many of our local unions are involved in campaigns to organize workers and assist them in bargaining for a living wage, job security, and increased benefits. The passage of the Employee Free Choice Act will greatly assist us in our current organizing campaigns and those campaigns in our future. We can ensure the passage of the Employee Free Act by electing candidates who support us on working family issues. The Labor Neighbor program was created to do just that; elect representatives who will fight for the right to organize workers. This is one of the many reasons that our local and international unions are strong supporters of the **Labor Neighbor** campaign.

Labor Neighbor is the grassroots member-to-member political education program that WORKS! In 2008, more than ever, union members can change the course of the election by volunteering, visiting other union households and educating other union members on the issues that are imperative for working families. We have ongoing phone banks in Seattle, Everett, and Tacoma on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings and Labor Walks (doorbelling union households) on the weekends. If you would like to help **Turn Around America**, contact me on my cell phone or email. (425-931-4875) or nsafrin@comcast.net

For your information: **Senator Barack Obama** is a co-sponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act and voted for it.

Senator John McCain voted against the Employee Free Choice Act.

YOU DECIDE. Vote on Nov. 4th.

A message from the Amalgamated Transit Union.

For more information visit the Washington State Labor Council web site: **www.wslc.org**

Commentary by John Sainz, Recording Secretary

It's time to address Solidarity again. There have been more cases lately at CT of one member going to Management to complain about another member. **Folks, this plays right into Management's hands. In case you'd somehow missed the fact, we're in contract negotiations here; now is not the time to dispense with Solidarity. The company wants us divided and will be happy to assist you in generating a rift if you'd care to create one.** If you don't feel you and the other member can work out the problem yourselves, bring in a Shop Steward, Executive Board Officer or an Executive Officer. We need to stick together; we need to try to solve our problems in-house whenever possible. This is true whether you're at CT, FT Everett, FT Tacoma or Senior Services.

Solidarity Now!!!

It's "Political Season" again. We have people on both sides of the political spectrum working here. Be tolerant of different opinions, or walk away if you can't; agree to disagree. I personally love a good political discussion, but I'm careful where and when I do so. You have a right, guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, to vote; a duty actually. This one right, above all others Americans have, is the one right the many oppressed people around the world are willing to die for. I'm not here to tell you how to vote. I'm here to ask you to vote intelligently. Read everything you can about all candidates for an office. Listen to the upcoming debates. Check out all of the candidates websites. Discuss the issues important to you with trusted family and friends. If you're still uncertain, check out websites you trust to be accurate. Accuracy is more important than partisanship. Don't assume a candidate's party preference means she/he is against your interests or for them. Be a smart voter. Our future depends on our involvement. Your vote definitely won't count if you don't cast it.

Lastly, I want to thank all of you who voted for me. I will do my best not to disappoint you. For those of you who voted for my opponent, I hope I can earn your trust. I'd especially like to thank Debra for her kind remarks and support.

Yours in Solidarity,
John

2009 Calendars It's time to decide what to order for our members at each property in the way of calendars for 2009. Last year we ordered the conventional ones for First Transit (Everett and) and the stick-on kind (to put in your vehicle) for Community Transit and Senior Services since at those two properties our employers give us calendars, too. We, at the Executive Board and the Member meetings, thought that would please our members at CT and SS but we only heard complaints (although I have noticed the stick-ons in several of our members' cars) and I don't know how many the complainants actually represent (because they're always the loudest). Since it's time to make a decision this year on what to order, that will be done at the next meeting. So, if you want a say-so as to **what's ordered this year, please come to the meeting with suggestions.** If you don't attend and contribute your input, then please remember, the members who do come are the ones who make the decisions for all of us and those are decisions we all will live with, like it or not! LOL

In solidarity,
Patty Ceis
Financial Secretary/Treasurer

Letters To The Union

Hello Kathleen, I just wanted to a moment to recognize you and say thank you for such a fine job you did of being right on the job as President of this union, and saving that work. As I read the news letter, I felt proud to have you as President of this union, I know that it hasn't been easy for you all the time with all that you have going on. But, I would like to say thank you, again. You handled that beautifully, and thank you for mentioning those parties responsible on the inside, I know how I will vote when election time rolls around for those individuals as well. I'm not very good with words as you are, But I just wanted you to know that I'm always proud of the job you do. GREAT JOB. -Aaron Nora

Dear Kathleen: Good job in saving the Sound Transit 532 run and good to have the news in print. -Diane Day (new at First Transit)

(These are but two of many emails and expressions of thanks this office has received. We appreciate it very much and we will continue to our best for you all.

Thanks,
Your Executive Officers.)



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WEINGARTEN RIGHTS

“If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, or affect my personal working conditions, I respectfully request that my Union Representative, Officer, or Steward be present at this meeting. Without representation present, I choose not to participate in this discussion.”

Upcoming Meetings

Sunday October 19, 2008 ~ 1:00 P.M.
Everett
(2810 Lombard)

Sunday October 19, 2008~ 5:30 P.M.
Tacoma
(IBEW Hall, 3049 S. 36th, Tacoma)

Tuesday October 21, 2008 ~ 10:00 A.M.

Our Local has sent flowers to Senior Services member Helen Tremblay And Elaine Vail, an Operator at Community Transit.

If you are not receiving the In Transit Magazine, we probably don't have your correct information. Please take the time to fill out a form:

UPDATE YOUR INFO FOR THE UNION HALL

NAME: _____

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