



Amalgamated Transit Union

Local #1576 Newsletter

September 2009

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Vice President's Report by Rick Jurkovic

Health Care Reform, Free Trade and the "Dream Act" for Undocumented College Students by Vice President Rick Jurkovic

These topics were at the top of the list at the Washington State Labor Council Convention that Financial Secretary Patty Ceis and I represented our Union as delegates at, August 6-8, in Wenatchee.

Traditionally, the Labor Movement has not only been behind working conditions but has also been in the forefront of major issues like Women's Rights and the Civil Rights movements. The Civil Rights movement, like the Labor movement, refers to themselves as "brothers and sisters." At WSCL convention we heard many speeches and attended multiple workshops, but at the top of the list were the 3 topics above. Labor Unions want health care reform, not only for the Union brothers and sisters, but for all Americans. Labor goes beyond looking out for just their own workers; Labor wants health care benefits for all workers.

Another issue that the Washington State Labor Council endorses is the TRADE Act. Trade agreements cannot be one sided. They have to protect the interest of American workers. If the agreements don't work, which these haven't, they need to be re-formed. Labor marched in Seattle 10 years ago in opposition to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Anarchist's took advantage of that peaceful march and the tear gas is what everyone remembers. Labor was taking on trade agreements then and is taking on trade agreements now. Rest assured that Labor intends on marking the 10th anniversary of that event.

One of the most interesting and provocative speakers at the Convention was Professor Kent Wong from UCLA. He was advocating for the Dream Act for "undocumented undergraduates." Professor Wong presented the case of thousands of undocumented high school graduates who find themselves in a situation not of their own making. They came into this country as obedient children and were able to get a high school education. What does not come with that diploma is the opportunity to get the documentation necessary to get a job. These undocumented students in the past had to pay non-resident tuition to get into colleges. Many of the undocumented high school graduates went on to college and earned Bachelors' Degrees, Master's Degrees and even PhD's only to face the job market illegally.

Labor supports diversity in the workplace and supports the "Dream Act" which would help the undocumented worker who ended up in this country through no fault of their own and were able to get a high school education. Labor stands up for health care for all Americans and Free Trade just as Labor has stood up in the past for equal pay for women workers and jobs for all American's regardless of race, creed or ethnic background. Supporting the Dream Act not only helps the undocumented undergraduate, it corrects an injustice in our society by documenting and giving recognition to achievers who overcame major obstacles and giving them status serves to elevate us as a society.

In Solidarity,
Rick Jurkovic



Financial Secretary/Treasurer's Report by Patty Ceis

BENEFITING FROM RETIREMENT

Retirement shouldn't have to bring non-involvement in Union interests. Very soon, more of us baby boomers will be reaching that age in significant numbers and as an experienced group with the benefits of the Labor movement, it is critical to hold on to the strength of such members through organization and structure.

There is an organization called the Washington State Alliance for Retired Americans that has a goal to build locally based retiree organizations throughout our state in order to create a more effective retiree movement. They create vital organizing centers, meetings and events for seniors and retirees with chapters throughout our state.

In the Puget Sound area, dating back to the 80's, retiree organizations have provided frequent and effective support to many of our unions and to broader community struggles. There is an excellent monthly newsletter, The Retiree Advocate, and a web site, www.PSARA.org (Puget Sound Alliance for Retired Americans, affiliate of the Washington State Alliance for Retired Americans and the Senior Citizens' Lobby) which provides news on issues of statewide and national interest and concern for working and retired Union advocates. For \$15, you will receive a year's membership in the PSARA and twelve issues of their monthly 8 page newsletter.

Get your news and analysis of world issues from a source other than a mass media that often doesn't have interest in the needs of the working (or retired) people. We want and need to keep supporters and political activists who have involved themselves on our behalf.

Patty Ceis



COPE NEWS

The following endorsements have been made by the Committee for their fall election campaigns: Michael Plunkett, Edmonds City Council and Kimberly Cole, Lynnwood City Council. The decisions were made based on the candidates' completion of our political questionnaire which showed them to be Labor and Transit friendly.



A reminder to our Members at CT: Please wear only approved uniform items. This includes hats and shorts. The Dispatchers have been instructed to send Operators home if they are "out of uniform", depending on the manpower situation. The Dispatchers have told me they don't want to be fashion police, but they don't want to be disciplined either. Dispatchers are ATU Members also. Please don't put them, or yourself, in a position that could lead to discipline.



Water, Water Everywhere by Melinda April, CT, Shop Steward, ATU Local #1576

Water, water everywhere but not a drop for the drivers. I am tired of hearing how CT wouldn't furnish water to the employees out in the field in temps over 80. The excuse was that the EA bought the water for the Drivers, as well as juice, popsicles, and even ice cream when the weather was over 80.

I received a phone call from a retiree who asked me if the Supervisors were handing out bottled water, juice, and popsicles when the temp was in the triple digits. Funny I said to her that she remember that as the supervisors were chastised by Management for buying us bottled water. She was speechless!! She said I'm glad I'm out of there. I have heard so much negativity on the "new Managers". I can't believe she said, that they would do that to drivers as hot as it was.

According to CT, I said to her, is that they never did provide us with water; that it was different Managers that bought it with their own money. CT had the Igloo containers that the Supervisors were to use. I got to thinking about that. I would think that it would be a whole hell of a lot healthier to use the bottled water as where did they fill the container? From a cancer causing hose? It sure wouldn't have been from the bathroom spigots would it? That would take days. Maybe one of the Supers is still in there filling it up. The shower--yuk. Maybe the mop room where they get the water for cleaning the floors. And how about cleaning those containers, with what and does it leave a residue? Then there is lifting the containers after they are filled. Who but Superman can lift those things. All excuses. They sit in their air condition offices and don't even think about it.

Water, Water (cont.)

Then Behind the Wheel comes out and there is a whole article about water and how buying plastic would fill up the landfills. Since when is CT worried about the landfill or recycling? Wouldn't they have at each P/R containers for "EVERYONE" to recycle? I guess they needed something to talk about as that was all there was in that issue. This written by a person who has work at CT going on 3 years and still has California plates on the car that is driven to work. Can't get a WA license? Then there is the Director's letter also explaining to the Supervisors why they can't do these things. Boy, what a bunch of psycho-babble.

You know you wouldn't treat an animal in the heat that we had if they were in a vehicle yet we are treated worse. I wish to thank the Supervisors for their humanitarian effort. Surely it can't be as much to buy water as CT pays their attorney to look over grievances. No place to store it you say? There is a perfectly usable shed outside that will store a pallet of water as well as an old Flyer sitting in a shed. There is also the counting room where we used to count the money from the fare boxes but it may be that's were they keep the money from the fare boxes. Don't know, but there is a perfectly empty building sitting on Casino Rd. Well I needed to get this off my chest.

Melinda



Margaret Evans, Assistant Transportation Manager at Community Transit, this "RICKY" is for you!

KIRO radio has a political commentator by the name of Ken Schramm who gives out "Shrammies" for what he considers to be absurd events. I thought I would do the same and present my very first "Ricky" to Margaret Evans, Assistant Manager of Transportation at Community Transit for her thoughtful "Behind the Wheel" article on the impropriety of using bottled water despite the record the setting temperature of 103 degrees.

Her thoughtful article was headlined with the words, "Hot Hot Hot." Obviously, if Margaret has ever really been "behind the wheel," she has apparently forgotten what it feels like to drive in 103 degree heat. Let me tell you what it feels like Margaret, as you're sitting in an air conditioned office. A few years back I was driving from Gold Bar to Everett in a coach with no air conditioning. It was a "hot hot hot" summer afternoon and I was driving into the sun figuring this was about as close to hell on earth as I was ever going to get. If I had been offered a bottle of ice cold water let me assure you I would not have given a rat's backside what it was bottled in.

I am sure about 350 coach operators agree with me, not to mention the rest of the ATU membership from First Transit Everett, Lakewood and Dart drivers. By the way Margaret, Core value number EIGHT is Integrity. I looked at the core values posted in the drivers lounge and concern for the environment is number nine. So it seems Margaret skipped core value "Integrity," making me wonder if there is a missing value at Community Transit.

Margaret, thank you for making it possible for me to give my very first "Ricky" to you!
Honorable Mention goes to Fred Worthen, Director of Transportation.

Regards,
Rick M. Jurkovic,



A Few Quotes

"Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift.
That is why it is called the present."

"In deep meditation the flow of concentration
is continuous like the flow of oil"

"The most important trip you take in life
is meeting people half way."

"Some succeed because they are destined to,
but most succeed because they are determined to."



Letters To The Editor (cont.)**The Water Gods by Scott Eiler, CT, Shop Steward, ATU Local #1576**

Hello Brothers and Sisters of ATU 1576. It's been quite a while since the last time I've had the honor and pleasure to submit an article for you to read. But after learning what our glorious Community Transit thinks about its Drivers during the previous extreme hot weather days that we have been having, I have felt that there is a need for my commentary. During my 15 years of employment here at Community Transit I have come to expect very little from the current Management team in the ivory tower. But when they have impeded the Supervisors the ability to provide us with bottled water, which is the lifeblood of the human race, it just makes me extremely angry and disgusted by the treatment that they continuously show what little they think of the health and welfare of the Drivers at Community Transit. During the last few months I really thought that there might be a few cracks coming from the ivory tower in their treatment of us mere Drivers by the way they were coming up with different committees which were designed to try to change the way things were done at Community Transit. But once again I found out that it was one big long April Fools' Day joke. They always seem to try to take one or two steps forward and then they take a giant leap backward. Well, this time they not only shot themselves in the foot with their explanation of why they are not buying us water but they also shot themselves in the head, more than once in fact. If protecting the environment is more important than the health and safety of the Drivers as well as the public then something drastically needs to be done to the people who manage us in the great and glorious ivory tower.

I was told by Management personnel that after we leave training we are issued a bottled water container to use for our water needs while out driving. Wow, wasn't that nice of them to do. However, in our extremely hot weather that we were having, that little quart of water would not even be enough to keep a Management person healthy to fill out all the difficult paperwork that they do at their desk. So Management was going to allow the Supervisors to have 5 gallon containers of water to refill our water containers that they so nicely issued to us after training. However, as we know most of the time the supervisors are busy doing what they normally do. Which is taking care of accidents, broken down buses and also dealing with the public. At least with bottled water you can take a few of them with you and have them as a backup in case you are stuck in traffic and run out of water from that "Special" water container that Community Transit spent so much money on for us.

If it sounds like I am just a little bit upset, aggravated or downright mad about this matter, you're absolutely right. I am absolutely totally 100% disgusted with how little Management thinks about our health and welfare while they sit in their nice air-conditioned comfort at the ivory tower with their nice cold water fountains while us drivers have to swelter out in the non-air-conditioned coaches that we still have. Also, after hearing that they feel that the right to cold water does not apply to us by the Washington State's Department of Labor and industries because we are not "technically" out in the field because we are inside a vehicle driving in an enclosed environment and not working technically "outside in the sun". So I challenge them the next time we have a high heat advisory that they turn off their air conditioning and their cold water fountains so they can see exactly how it is that we have to put up with , not in the field, but in a bus.

Now I would personally like to take the extreme honor of thanking our fellow Supervisors, who had to put up with Managements protest over buying bottled water, and pooled their own money to go out to buy us Drivers the bottled water that we have been receiving over the last few days. If it wasn't for the Supervisors , the last few days we would of seen a lot more Drivers call-in for road reliefs and possible medical help because of the high heat. So on behalf of all the Drivers I want to give you a very special "Thank You" in a job well done. And as far as Management goes, I hope you guys feel extremely ashamed over what you have done and how far back you have set relations with the Drivers.

Scott Eiler



Commentary by John Sainz, Recording Secretary

I need to print a correction to the July commentary. I listed the Lynnwood Police Department as the agency that failed to respond in a timely manner to our Brother's 911 call for help at LTC. I am told it was SNO-COMM, the central 911 Dispatch for our the county, who was the actual guilty party. Regardless of who handled the call, something such as a major transit center in an area of responsibility for a 911 call center or police department should have a list of transit centers complete with addresses, just in case the Dispatcher taking the 911 call isn't familiar with the area. Heck, even the Dispatchers at CT have such a list.

I had intended to add a few pointed remarks on the "Water Fiasco" at CT, but as you will have read, the subject was well covered. I would like to add my thanks to the Supervisors who got water at their own expense and to our President, Kathleen Custer, who said "let them try to stop me" when we got word at the Union Office of what was going on. She went to Costco and purchased ice and 315 bottles of water (for a measly \$35.00), loaded it into two huge coolers and brought it to the P&R's where she and I distributed it. I wish we had had more time to continue as it didn't get any cooler for several more hours that night. I'd also like to add my astonishment as well at the ridiculous response from CT as to why they wouldn't supply water. One of the Operators I gave water to was one of the Coach Operators of the Quarter. His face was beet-red and he was so hot he wasn't even sweating anymore. His voice was uncharacteristically raspy. Simply put, he looked like Hell. **I guess having him fall out of the seat dead from heat stroke resulting in the crash of a 30 footer full of passengers into one or more other vehicles resulting in a score of serious injuries and lawsuits would have been preferable to supplying him with water.** What a wonderful morale-improving event this was. So much for Fred Worthen's Warm and Fuzzy program. Lots of warm people with dry (fuzzy?) tongues. Does that count?

One issue of great importance to all of us is funding for transit operating expenses. This includes our wages as well as fuel to run our coaches and buses on. According to our International President, Warren George, our illustrious members of the U.S. House of Representatives Transportation and Infrastructure Committee introduced a bill entitled the *Surface Transportation Authorization Act of 2009*. The result of this bill, had it been passed into law, would have increased public transportation funding for the next six years by 90%. But our leaders, in their infinite wisdom, determined the bill would have to wait for at another 18 months as it wasn't considered a serious enough need to be dealt with at this time. That took me by surprise as President Obama himself has said Mass Transit is the key to reducing the number of cars on the roadways, thus helping to reduce a primary source of global warming. Pardon me, but aren't Coach Operators sitting in the drivers' seats and fuel in the fuel tanks sort of necessary to make Mass Transit work? Anyone with half a brain knows new buses with no one to operate them and no fuel to run them with makes absolutely no sense. You do have to wonder at the magnificence and enlightenment of our lawmakers sometimes, don't you?

As you know, two of our properties, our Members at First Transit Lakewood and CT, are still without new contracts. I can assure you, our Negotiating Teams are doing their level best to obtain the very best deals we can for you. It my understanding the remaining issues at FT Lakewood are the tough ones: the economic issues. First Transit is sure to plead poverty. The Members at CT are yet again gone through another unnecessarily long, but unfortunately normal, negotiation process. This too, will hopefully come to a fair and equitable result soon. The other Executive Officers and I continue to stand ready to meet to hammer out an agreement satisfactory to all parties.

Enjoy the rest of your Summer (with intermittent periods of Fall),
In Solidarity, John.



Driver Maintenance by Chris Reiter, CT, Executive Board Officer, ATU Local #1576

The most common complaint I hear nowadays is that Management does not think a lot of us as Drivers, because they don't do this for us or they do that to us. What about the issue of me taking care of myself.

If we don't take care of ourselves, then why would we expect Management to? My point that I'm trying to get at is that we have to make sure that we are getting out of the seat and stretching, using the restroom and getting a quick bite of lunch. Please, do at least one of the preceding actions at each end of your trip. It only takes about ten minutes at each end, and we deserve this accommodation. Please make sure you are calling in to let Dispatch know that you need some "driver maintenance. If your run is habitually running late, then start documenting times, filling out the scheduling adjustment form and also contact one of our SPIT team members.

I am working with Management in the Labor/Management Relations Committee to try to change our policy of having to let passengers on our coaches during layovers because it is nice to be able to get away from the public and shut down for ten. Suggestions can be submitted to the Driver Fatigue Committee. In my 22 years of working at CT I have never seen an employee disciplined for taking "driver maintenance". REMEMBER: You drive the schedule, don't let the schedule drive you.



Officer Contact Information

Kathleen Custer, President/BA

kcusterpres1576@verizon.net

Rick Jurkovic, Vice President

rjurkovicvpres1576@verizon.net

Patty Ceis, Financial Secretary

pceisfinsec1576@verizon.net

John Sainz, Recording Secretary

jsainzrecsec1576@verizon.net

Website: atu1576.org

Upcoming Charter Meetings

Sunday, October 18, 2009

@ 1:00 P.M.

(2810 Lombard, Everett)

Sunday, October 18, 2009

@ 5:30 P.M.

(IBEW Hall, 3049 S. 36th, Tacoma)

Tuesday, October 20, 2009

@ 10:00 A.M.

(2810 Lombard, Everett)

Amalgamated Transit Union

Local #1576

2810 Lombard Ave, Suite 203

Everett, WA 98201

Office: (425) 259-4544, (800) 266-8841

Fax: (425) 303-8645

E-mail: atu1576@verizon.net

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.”

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