



Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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An injury to one is an injury to all

In solidarity, unionists of all trades visit Capitol, urge legislators to do the right thing

OLYMPIA -- Hundreds of energized leaders and rank-and-file members of Washington's unions descended on the State Capitol to meet with their elected representatives Friday as part of the Washington State Labor Council Legislative Lobbying Conference. In the context of what's happening in Washington, D.C., there was a palpable sense of determination to fight for social justice, civil rights and workplace standards.

"Sisters and Brothers, we are in a war and we all need to step up to leadership," said WSLC President Jeff Johnson in his opening remarks. "We need to educate and activate our members to understand the threats to our unions, our families and our communities. (We must) resist these attacks on us, recognizing that an attack on any one of us -- while, black, brown, LGBTQ, Muslim, Jewish, old, young, or union -- is an attack on all of us. An injury to one is truly an injury to all."

That call to action set the stage for a brief lobbying training by WSLC Government Affairs Director Joe Kendo and Legislative and Policy Director Eric González Alfaro, and then it was off to the Capitol. Machinists, teachers, electricians, fire fighters, longshore workers, public employees, laborers, engineers -- workers in dozens of trades, public and private -- grouped by legislative district and met with legislators to talk about issues that matter to working families this session in Olympia, including:

■ **Fully funding public education** -- Our children and teachers have waited long enough for a solution to insufficient and inequitable school funding. But working families don't want to sacrifice other important state services and priorities to fix this. That means new revenue is needed. Lawmakers must close unproductive tax loopholes and reform our regressive tax code so that people that can most afford to pay for the common good do so.

■ **Funding state employees contracts** -- After years of asking public workers to do more for less, our state faces a recruitment and retention crisis. Public services suffer when state employees can't afford to support their own families. The modest cost-of-living adjustments in these contracts are an absolutely necessary

investment in our public workforce and quality state services.

■ **Protecting workers' compensation** -- Our safety net for injured workers and their families is under attack. Bills have been introduced to cut benefits, restrict eligibility, and convert our workers' compensation system into a game of "Let's Make a Deal" where employers get to bargain how much less they can pay when an employee is severely injured at work. Business lobbying groups are pushing hard for this, and working families are pushing back.

■ **Washington Voting Rights Act** -- It's time to provide local governments a process by which they can determine *on their own* the fairest way to ensure all communities are represented in local elections. This bill has repeatedly passed the Democratic-controlled House, but has been denied a vote in the Senate. Meanwhile, cities continue to face legal expenses defending unfair, undemocratic voting systems that the state won't let them change.

Many other legislative issues were covered in Friday's meetings and this *WSLC Legislative Update* newsletter will continue to keep readers apprised of their status and fate.

The hundreds who took a day off to show up and be heard in Olympia are setting an example for the kind of activism needed to defend against attacks and make progress on these issues. WSLC Secretary Treasurer Lynne Dodson made this point Friday, quoting Frederick Douglass, the black 19th century journalist/activist who's done an amazing job and is being recognized more and more (according to the president):

"If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

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