

The Technician's Fight for a First Contract with PSAV

PSAV is a national corporation who has a majority market-share of in-house AV contracts with hotels & convention centers in the US and Canada. From tiny boardrooms, to giant multi-thousand seating general sessions, they provide the audio, lighting, and video technology and operators who make events possible in private, non-profit, and public sectors. While several regions that PSAV operates in have a CBA with the riggers who do work with hanging and hoisting motors, only one region has a CBA with PSAV Technicians: Philadelphia, being represented through IATSE Local 8. Several years before the technicians in Philadelphia ratified a bargaining unit, the PSAV technicians in Seattle sought representation with IATSE Local 15 for the purposes of collective bargaining. In late 2015, the technicians in the Puget Sound Region, covering Seattle, Tacoma, Tukwila, and Bellevue voted to be represented by IATSE Local 15 and were certified as a collective bargaining unit by the National Labor Relations Board.

The technicians sought to be represented by IATSE and a contract with PSAV for many reasons. Often the technicians who laid down tape on cable and operated a large audio console for a major company's general session were paid the same low rates. PSAV never paid any daily overtime, only the state mandated OT after 40 hours a week, even though other AV companies in the region offered daily OT after 8 or 10 hours to their employees. Technicians' schedules would often change on a whim, and only get a mostly correct schedule several days out. With working 10, 12, 16 or even 18-hour days at times, more than 5 days a week, that meant that technicians would barely be able to spend any time with their families or loved ones. Technicians would have to live far away from the hotels they worked at because they couldn't afford to pay rent in Seattle or Bellevue. Technicians would get fired or written up for arbitrary reasons without enough evidence to warrant such punishments. Technicians sought stability in their schedules, better working conditions, getting paid what they were worth for their work, and protections from predatory and toxic practices.

When the Seattle technician unit was certified, PSAV did everything it could to stall a first contract, from trying to throw out the vote on a technicality, to denying the technicians our annual merit-based pay raises, to hiring freezes, and refusing to negotiate in good faith over economic issues in contract negotiations. IATSE has successfully filed several Unfair Labor Practice charges against PSAV, but even with legal precedents from those ULPs, and a ratified contract with IATSE Local 8 in Philadelphia, negotiations are in a stalemate because PSAV has refused to provide financial information. The technicians have been waiting for nearly four years for a first contract, and while some conditions have thankfully improved, the conditions most important for the day-to-day lives of the technicians has remained unchanged.

The AV industry is often thankless. The technicians are in early before each event, and out late after each event. They work behind the scenes to make sure that any event goes smoothly, that any spectacle remains incredible, and that, at the end of the day, you are satisfied with whatever event that you are a part of, whether planner or attendee. All the technicians ask for is fair treatment, fair & adequate pay for their work, and fair use of their time.

Please help the Puget Sound PSAV Technicians get a first contract with PSAV!