

Essential Clallam County Workers Earn Deserved Hazard Pay

This June, in the middle of the pandemic, Clallam County Patrol Deputies and Corrections Deputies secured major hazard pay victories for this crisis and future ones. Not only did Locals 1619-D and 1619-CD gain a 2% wage increase in 2021, but, as essential workers, they were able to secure 1% hazard pay during the COVID pandemic – and for the duration of any future emergency declarations.

“In addition to the above increases, the following positions will receive a hazard pay premium of one percent (1%) whenever a Declaration of Emergency has been issued by the County Administrator and/or the Clallam County Board of Commissioners for so long as the Declaration of Emergency remains in effect: Patrol Deputies.”

Perhaps the most important part of the agreement was that the 1% benefit will extend for the length of any future emergency declarations – not just COVID-19. With inherent unpredictability in emergency situations, having this language permanently in place will ensure essential workers receive increased wages any time they face additional risk.

The County was quick to come to an agreement – showing real dignity and respect for their employees, and recognizing the harsh conditions they face during a pandemic. It’s a good reminder for us all to thank the essential workers and Council 2 members who have served us courageously and selflessly throughout the pandemic.

Steve Brooks, Vice President Local 1619-CD Vice President and Clallam County Corrections Deputy, said “As Corrections Deputies, we simply do not have the option to work from home. The extra pay is at least a symbolic type of appreciation by the Sheriff’s Office and the County to acknowledge first responder work.”

This smart negotiation driven by Locals 1619-D and 1619-CD demonstrates how essential workers should bargain – and how they should be treated by management, especially when their health and safety is on the line.

Council 2 helped fight for this contract provision because these employees must always answer the call – there’s no good option for remote work or telecommuting when your job is to protect public safety. During the pandemic, these employees have been deemed essential – and the hazard pay agreement helps address the additional risk they take on from doing their jobs in person and exposure they have to the virus.

SmartAsset Ranks Washington's Unions the Strongest in the Country

“Leading the way in the study once again is Washington State, which ranks in the top six of the study for six out of the eight metrics we considered. More specifically, 18.80% of workers are in unions, the third-highest rate in this study. Washington ranks second overall for the four-year change in union membership, which increased by 27.63% from 2015 to 2019. The average annual wage for all workers in Washington is \$62,020, the fourth-highest in our study.” – SmartAsset



STATES WITH THE STRONGEST UNIONS					
Rank	State	# of Union Members	% of Workers in a Union	4 Year Change in Union Membership	SmartAsset Index
1	Washington	637,878	18.80%	27.63%	100
2	California	2,488,479	15.14%	0.54%	97.39
3	New York	1,732,569	20.98%	-14.94%	94.98

Members Take Advantage of Free College Program and Recommend to Others

Council 2 members are taking advantage of AFSCME’s free college program, and encouraging others to enroll as well.

Carrie Caffrey, City of Bothell Public Works Department staff and President of Local 3845, recommends the program to all her fellow members after enrolling in the program herself. Caffrey, who didn’t have the opportunity to attend college growing up, recently graduated with a degree in Business Management.

“You’ve got to start somewhere,” said Caffrey. “You’re never too old and you’re never too late.” She stresses that members shouldn’t be intimidated, members can start slow, and the classes are not difficult to begin. Caffrey says the program is a great opportunity for others who didn’t or couldn’t pursue higher education in their youth, but still want to advance their career.

Members can earn a degree in Business Management, Criminal Justice, Education, and other fields, all in their spare time and completely for free. Tom Akins, a public facilities employee with the City of Seacac and a member of Local 3830, said with the exception of around \$25 to send past transcripts, “I haven’t paid a single penny yet”, as he pursues a bachelor’s degree after completing his associate’s degree in Business Administration.

“It’s been absolutely free,” said Caffrey. “That’s what I’ve been telling people. If the textbooks are not embedded within the online

classwork, they will actually send you a textbook through the mail.”

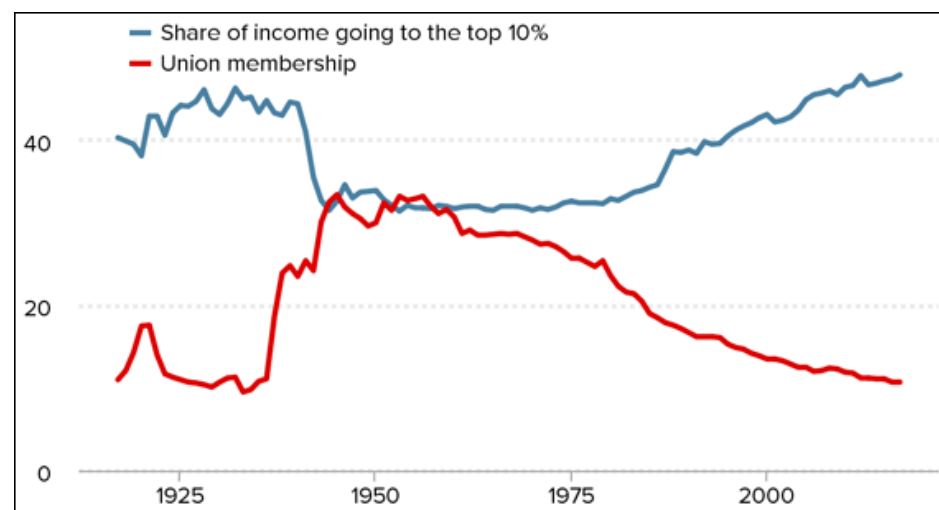
Akin hopes to use his experience and education to manage operations for a department or city, something that might not have been possible without access to the free college program. He said Council 2’s promotion of the program was critical, “even the literature that comes in our new hire pamphlet.”

Akin and Caffrey both suggest members speak with their coworkers and union reps. “Having somebody who works next door to them say ‘Hey I’m doing it and this is how it works,’ might encourage people who haven’t been in school in a very long time to say, ‘I’m gonna do that,’” said Akin.

The program can also be used by family members and dependents – Caffrey said her daughter has completed prerequisites for a respiratory therapy degree using the program, after promising the two would start college together.

Classes are online – making things convenient around work schedules and especially during the pandemic, and members can take as few or many classes as they have time for, from just one per academic period to a full course load.

To sign up and learn more about the program visit freecollege.afscme.org or talk to your local rep.



This graph from the Economic Policy Institute shows how union density and the percentage of income going to the richest 10 percent of Americans are related. As union membership goes up, wealth distribution is less concentrated.



Council 2 Is Standing with Workers During COVID

In the face of a global pandemic and recession, Council 2 members and Reps are using collaborative bargaining and past recession experience to protect jobs and benefits for workers.

Library Employees and Management Adapt to the Pandemic to Protect Staff

With libraries closed across the state at the outset of the pandemic, Timberland Regional Library staff and management worked together to proactively devise a strategy to prevent layoffs, outsourcing, and widespread cuts.

Utilizing a variety of different steps, the two sides were able to develop a plan that protected workers and prevented loss of paychecks during the pandemic.

Previous editions of the newsletter have covered and highlighted Timberland Regional Library’s “Collaborative Based Bargaining,” which brings together management and staff early in the negotiating process to determine a new contract based on open conversations and trust built through mutual respect. In the case of the pandemic, this same approach has been followed as library staff acted quickly to put a plan in place before cuts needed to be made.

With many employee roles reduced, this started by offering paid administrative leave widely and adjusting to roles and responsibilities to ensure library workers could stay on the staff in the long term. From there, the library worked with Council 2 to protect workers who were at greatest risk of being contracted out, revising roles and responsibilities to ensure that they could stay on staff, now and in the future.

Timberland Regional Library next offered robust retirement options for eligible members, helping to clear budget obligations, reduce work roles, and encourage workers to retire early. This was crucial for reducing long term costs and helping at-risk staff avoid additional virus exposure during the pandemic.

One of the most important considerations during this pandemic response deliberation was reassignments. Timberland Regional Libraries are spread across 5 counties and the effects of the pandemic have caused the needs of different locations to shift. Council 2 worked with management to look at the needs of each library, identify roles that would allow staff to stay employed, maintain the same full-time hours, and prevent exceptionally long commutes.

“Kudos to TRL for initiating and continuing weekly check-ins with our Staff Reps since the pandemic started,” said Aggie Burstein, President, Local 3758. “Communication and collaboration have been key to navigating these often chaotic and ever evolving times.”

There is a lesson to be learned that for the next round of negotiations and responses to budget emergencies: when possible, a collaborative style of the negotiations can make a big difference. Because of this – and because they began working on a response right away – the employees, the library, and the union were able to map out a comprehensive response to the pandemic that worked for everyone.

Even in Pandemic, City of Lakewood Local 1938 Employees and Council 2 Achieve COLA Win

Earlier this year, employees for the City of Lakewood had almost completely finished bargaining around a new contract with a solid agreement that would help employees get ahead. All that was left to negotiate was a Cost of Living Adjustment that would ensure employees’ wages kept up with increasing expenses.

Then, a giant wrench was thrown into the discussions – the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic set in

and budget questions arose for every local government across the state, there was immediate concern about what kind of COLA – if any – could be afforded by the City of Lakewood.

“We were one week away from having a really strong four-year contract, because the economy was booming and everything was looking good. Then the pandemic hit,” said Cathy Short, Local 1938. “We made the hard decision to go for a shorter-term contract. A longer-term contract would have meant more stability, but the shorter term was more favorable to the Union employees and also the City – since we didn’t know how COVID would affect the economy and for how long. We decided to compromise for a two-year contract.”

The uncertainty around COVID’s impact meant that negotiations had to stall. Over the course of the next several months, Council 2 and the City of Lakewood reviewed their options before coming back to the table to work on this final piece of the contract.

“We wanted to preserve as many jobs as we could, and we even considered not taking a COLA for the first year to preserve jobs,” said Short. “The City illustrated in budget discussions that a reasonable COLA wouldn’t make a difference one way or another, so we were able to get to a 2.5% for both years. We’ll see how the economy looks when we get back to the table, and hopefully get an even better deal for our Local 1938 members at that time.”

During a challenging and unprecedented time, City of Lakewood employees and Council 2 were able to secure a COLA they knew was critical for city employees to thrive. This success shows that, even during challenging times, Council 2 will keep fighting for fair wages and benefits for workers.

Council 2 Draws on Past Recession Experience to Prevent Layoffs

With local governments across Washington facing large deficits and sobering budget realities, Council 2 is preparing for tough contract battles by standing strong in support of workers and drawing on past experience from decades of negotiations.

One recent example in the Kitsap Prosecutor’s Office shows how Council 2’s experience and history of supporting workers through tough recessions has already been critical for keeping members employed.

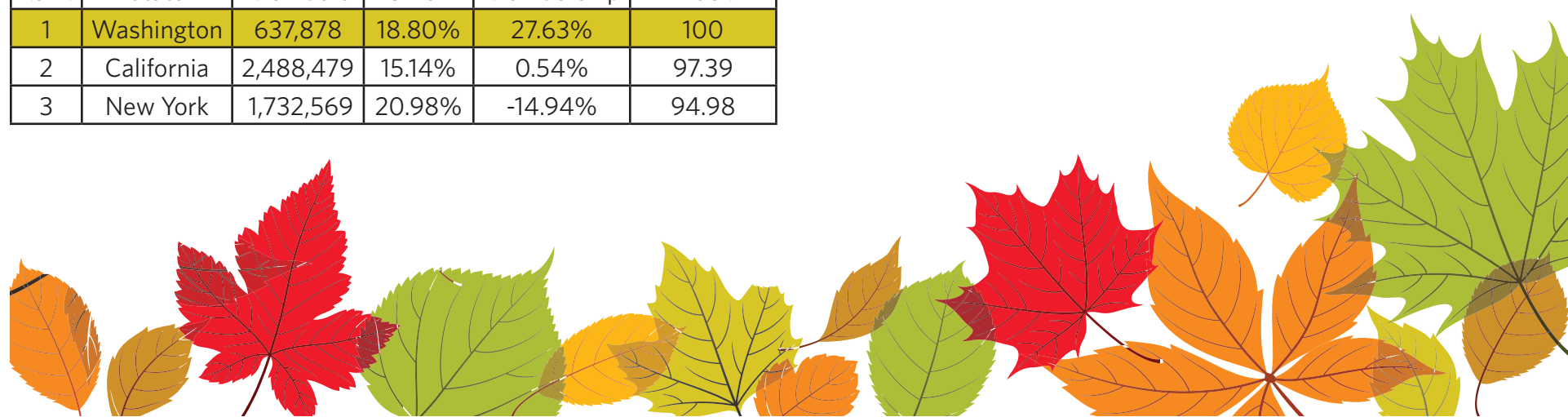
In that office, furloughs were considered for salaried Council 2 members, while non-represented lawyers, paid hourly, didn’t face the same threat. Council 2 immediately sprang into action, suggesting a solution that would cut hours for all employees, rather than furloughs or layoffs.

But when the employer didn’t see this as a viable option because of overtime eligibility and other expenses, Council 2 looked back at how similar offices have responded to budget crunches and recessions – determining a strong alternative.

In the past, the City of Tacoma worked with hourly employees to take a payout, as well as use additional floating holidays to prevent layoffs. Drawing on that, Council 2 proposed the same solution – a clear option that met the needs of all employees and management.

While management once again initially balked at the proposal, they later came back in agreement, since it was clear that all requirements were met, keeping employees on the job and the budget in control.

In challenging situations and negotiations like these, having a union well versed in all potential solutions, staffed with experienced representatives, and motivated to protect workers makes all the difference.





Letter from the President

CHRIS DUGOVICH

It is with great sadness that I write this column, honoring one of the many individuals who made countless contributions to make Council 2 the great Union that it is today. Mike Smith, a long-time member, former President of the Spokane County Correctional officers, Local 492, and member of the State Executive Board who finished his career as a 20-year Council 2 staff member, passed away September 27th, 2020.

Mike was the President of Local 492 in 1992 when the membership, frustrated by Spokane County's lack of movement in contract negotiations, authorized a strike. The membership of 492 were united and all walked out after the swing shift was completed on a Friday night.

In their true fashion, Spokane County threatened disciplinary action - even termination - to those who would strike, even before it began. Their threats turned into action after the strike started.

Initially, Spokane's Superior Court judges refused to hear a motion for an injunction to stop the strike. So the County attorneys instead solicited assistance from a judge in Pend Oreille County. At that point, our thought process was "here it comes... the 'hanging judge,'" so Mike, myself and other local leadership left town.

We knew that if the judge granted an injunction law enforcement would have to quickly find at least Mike and myself to serve us with a warrant, demanding we either call off the strike or be subject to arrest.

Therefore, we went to Idaho to complicate and slow down the service across the state lines.

This is before the days of cellphones (ancient history). Our communications back to Spokane were mostly through pay phones off I-90 in Coeur d'Alene. Council

Remembering Mike Smith

2's attorney at the time was Pamela Bradburn. She was back at the courthouse in Spokane dealing with an irate sheriff, county management and the judge. Because of Pamela's legal pedigree they could not arrest her.

Both Mike and I were on the phone with Pamela when we heard a big commotion in the background. The sheriff just learned we were in Idaho. He knew what that meant - not only because it slowed service of a motion to end the strike, but also because of the grief he was receiving from deputy sheriffs, now forced to staff the jail.

The judge turned out to be a big help. Rather than grabbing the noose, he told both parties he did not want to rule on the injunction until we met and tried one last time to negotiate a settlement.

With the judge's assistance, Pamela negotiated free passage for Mike and I to return to negotiate, hopefully, a settlement. The judge also agreed, if forced to rule, he would allow Mike and I a head start prior to issuing any warrant.

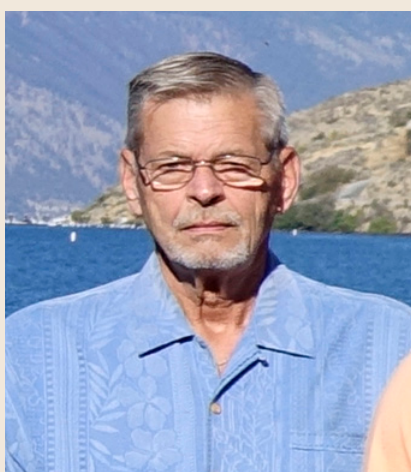
We walked into the ornate Spokane County courthouse at 7pm on Saturday night. We made a lot of noise walking down the dark, deserted courthouse until turning into a well-lit conference room. In the room was the extremely irate sheriff - Larry Erickson - along with the county administrator and others.

My immediate thought looking at Erickson was that this is not going anywhere. For months we had suffered through an endless stream of offers that never exceeded 2%.

This night was different - they offered 8%. I was surprised and so was Mike!

We looked at each other, and as calmly as possible told the other side we needed to talk. We walked down the hallway, around a corner, broke out in huge smiles, then tried to limit our joy to about a dozen high fives and muted laughter.

After a few minutes, we regained our composure, walked back in and informed the other side with a straight face, that it would be a tough sell but believed the membership would ratify the offer.



Local 492 voted Sunday and everyone went back to work on Monday.

That effort was all the members of Local 492 and its President Mike Smith.

Mike did not stop there. He was the driving force for Correctional Officers statewide gaining the right to settle contract disputes with interest arbitration, like the rest of the law enforcement. The legislation Mike championed was signed into law by then Governor Lowry within 2 years of the '92 strike.

All of those events and outcomes were the result of Mike's strength of character, the respect he showed to the members of Local 492, and the respect they had for him.

Prior to his career in Corrections and with Council 2, Mike spent more than 20 years in the US Navy. He lived just north of Spokane with his wife Donna.

Mike was a good friend to myself, all the staff, and countless members. He was a legendary storyteller whose "tough guy" persona and gruff demeanor was exceeded by his loyalty as a friend and colleague.

Dean Verduyze, a longtime Spokane area co-worker of Mike's, along with Pat Thompson and myself used to poke fun at Mike with the refrain: "Of course he can do that, he is Mike Smith!"

He is Mike Smith. And he will be missed by all who knew him.

Taking Furloughs, Critical for Saving Jobs, Putting Community First

As the effects of the pandemic continue to be felt, and as the recession's impact hits close to home in county and city budgets, all of us face difficult choices and tough decisions. As Council 2 and our Local Unions negotiate with employers to secure the best possible outcomes for our members, individuals may be asked to make sacrifices that ultimately put us all ahead.

Some employees will be asked to take furloughs - necessary to prevent mass layoffs and additional cuts and reductions. Accepting furloughs are critical for protecting our fellow employees, strengthening our community, and ensuring as swift a recovery as possible.

Below, the City of Bothell Local President Carrie Caffrey, a senior employee, writes a compelling explanation of why consideration of these options is critical.

Those that have made it through the recession of 2008 and the haircut of 2011 will agree that this is by far the worst things have ever been.

This is not just a mismanagement of funds, a City of Bothell problem or even a "it doesn't affect me problem".

In the end this is all of our problem, not just because we form bonds with co-workers, and not just because we are all connected through various parts of jobs throughout the city.

It is because we have a responsibility to each other as human beings. This is not the time to send people out to look for employment. As you look around at other cities, counties and every state in the nation they are all currently experiencing shortfalls due to COVID-19. I can say this will not be easy for my family and as much as it will "hurt", I will still have a job.

6 months of a sacrifice is a small blip in my career. My main concern is keeping a roof over people's heads and food on their table. Personally, I see that I have no other choice in order to help save 15-20 more people, that we consider family, to stay employed and vote yes to accept furloughs.

During this financial crisis, we will all have to make sacrifices. Together, we can take this pandemic and recession head-on by supporting each other so that we come out the other side stronger than ever.

Issaquah Bus Drivers Show Resilience, Flexibility, Solidarity in COVID-19 Response

In early March, when school was cancelled throughout Washington, Issaquah bus drivers weren't sure what was coming next. Since then, drivers have been tasked with a variety of projects, including delivering meals for low-income families, transporting laptops and mobile hotspots for remote learning, and some are now driving students who are in special needs programs.

Even with students taking classes from home, drivers have played a critical role keeping students learning.

"Issaquah school bus drivers care deeply for the students and families they serve. During this challenging time, when we are separated from our students and concerned about their well-being, we have welcomed the opportunities Issaquah School District has given us to continue to support students and their families," said Heather McCrone, an Issaquah school bus driver since 2013 and Local 21-I Union Shop Steward.

The circumstances have been challenging, as something initially thought to last two weeks has expanded to seven months. For Christina and Vicki Gould, who are married and both Issaquah bus drivers, they are taking the pandemic "one day at a time," finding the uncertainty difficult, especially not knowing when regular work will resume and what the plan and timeline to safely reopen schools will be.

Vicki Gould says the situation is still hard to imagine, "Who would have ever thought the school drivers would not be working?" She is at increased risk for the virus, hasn't been able to return to work, and worries about when it will be safe to return to work, a concern also shared by some of the district's older drivers.

Christina Gould, who also transported laptops and hotspots around the district, said that delivering meals was a good opportunity to see and visit with students. Now, as responsibilities have changed, she "really misses seeing students and being able to interact with them."

They point to the support of fellow

drivers as something that has helped get them through the pandemic, "All the drivers welcome us with open arms, and everybody sticks together, and everybody helps everybody when they can," said Christina Gould. She adds that a silver lining of the pandemic has been seeing drivers "support each other."

Drivers have also worked to keep up the morale of their students, producing a video slideshow to let their students know they missed them and were thinking about them.

"The school district put the slideshow on their website and students and their families were able to watch the video and see words of encouragement and caring from their driver," said McCrone. "All 122 routes were represented, and substitute drivers participated as well."

View the full video drivers made for their students at [TinyURL.com/ISSBusDrivers](https://tinyurl.com/ISSBusDrivers)

Issaquah bus drivers are looking forward to when they can return to regular work, but in the meantime, they are meeting the demands of the moment and helping to keep kids learning - showing the important impact bus drivers make supporting each other, their students, and our entire community.



Driver De Ernst helps deliver sack lunches available for children in the community 18 & under. Several buses picked up lunches from the high school each day, and drove to multiple locations throughout the district to support local families.



Driver Heather McCrone's message to her students.



Driver Christina Gould



Drivers made different signs to relay messages, some including their pets.

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