

You're in the Union: now What?

How can I get involved?

As a new member of Local 17, there are many new opportunities for you to get involved. Your level of involvement can be as simple as participating in contract surveys or getting involved in your local chapter. It is imperative for members to be involved at all levels to make the union strong in the workplace.

Contract Time

All of the Local 17 contracts have contract cycles with the individual employers. Some Local 17 contracts last two years, while others last three years. Sometimes contracts may be extended for one year. When these contracts expire, members indicate the changes they would like to see in the next contract.

During contract time, you can participate directly in bargaining through a Contract Action Team (CAT) or by running for the Contract Bargaining Team. You can also participate by filling out bargaining surveys to provide input into the contract or by helping your steward or bargaining team post or distribute information.

Year-round Opportunities

You can also get involved at your work site. In some units, you can become a member of a Labor Management Committee (LMC), where you can address workplace issues with management. You can also become a Shop Steward, representing Local 17 as an agent in the workplace promoting Local 17, representing employees and workplace issues, and administering the union contract. They also help post and distribute union information. Steward helpers are also needed.

Policy Committees are another opportunity to share your skills. You can get involved in a Policy Committee, if one exists in your group. Through Policy Committees, union members come together to discuss issues in the workplace. For example, at Seattle King County Public Health, two committees — safety and public awareness are currently being formed. These committees will help the union representative by gathering information about safety to take to management and will help organize publicity activities for public health.

Chapter

Your involvement in the union can go beyond contract administration and workplace issues. There are also many opportunities within Local 17 to get involved. Local 17 has more than 20 chapters throughout Washington State.

Chapters provide a forum for members to come together to discuss the affairs of their union and the labor community.



State negotiating team members are currently negotiating their collective bargaining agreement.

They address issues pertaining to their workplaces and seek solutions to problems. At the chapter level, you can run for chapter leadership or you can be elected to become a member of the Regional Executive Committee (REC), which is the main policy making body for Local 17.

Labor and Social Justice Activities

Numerous rallies, activities and trainings happen year round for union activists in different organizations. Read Local 17 publications for more information.

There are also labor councils and other types of social justice organizations in almost every area of the state that will help keep you informed and have opportunities to get involved and make a positive difference.

Politics

Elected officials have a direct influence in the policies and contract issues in your workplace. It's important to elect officials who support labor issues. You can vote for "labor friendly" candidates, work on their campaigns, or contribute to Local 17's political action fund (PAC). This fund is completely voluntary and no union dues go into it.

You are the Union

Your voice makes a difference in the union. We encourage all members to get involved because you are the union. Through your involvement, you will help build a stronger union in the workplace and beyond.

Contact your Union Representative to discuss ways you can get involved. A brochure with more detailed information on opportunities is available by emailing taryn@ifpte17.org.

— *Adrienne Thompson, Local 17 Union Representative*