



Knowing Your Past: How it Can Help You in the Future

As a steward, it's important to know a little about the organization that you help represent in your role.

Local 17 has a rich history that spans 90 years. Having such a long history means that with every contract that is negotiated, improvements have been made—good working conditions and contracts are the result of many years of negotiating.

It's sometimes easy to forget that good working conditions often exist because members before had worked hard to improve them through contract negotiations, labor management partnerships or just working with the union. Having some sense of what it took to create these conditions will help you keep them in the future.

And, when negotiating a contract, it's also helpful to know how and why articles came about in order to build and improve on them. Knowing the intent and the process of bargaining good language in a contract is often useful and helps other members understand that some things were a “struggle” to get, and in the future, may be even more difficult.

For example, health care is an area members may take for granted. Maintaining health care premiums with little or no out-of-pocket employee contributions is not guaranteed in a contract. The terms of health care costs are negotiated and fought for in every contract.

Just being able to negotiate health care is a benefit that non-union workers do not enjoy, and with rising costs, it's becoming more difficult to get good language. If members know and understand the history of negotiations, they may be more unified and ready to fight to keep good benefits when the time comes.

Learn More About Local 17's History at the Local 17 Leadership Conference, April 26

Local 17 has a rich history, which will be celebrated at the Local 17 Leadership Conference commemoration on Sat., April 26. There will be exciting guest speakers, prizes and fun activities at this special even special event! *Don't miss it!*

Call the Local 17 office to get a conference registration form at 206-328-7321, ext. 121 or email Anthony@ifpte17.org.

It's also a good idea to know some history of your bargaining unit, i.e. why the unit joined and what the issues were at the time. History often has a way of repeating itself and your workplace can change in an instant when a new manager comes on or a re-organization occurs.

Knowing what to watch for and what your union rights are is always important. Being familiar with some history about the organization may also give you an appreciation for the struggles of those who came before you and will help reinforce that having good working conditions is not something to take for granted. — *By Taryn Gerhardt, Local 17 Communications Director*