

What is Local 17? — a Lesson in Local 17 and AFL-CIO History

As a steward, members may ask you questions about your union. Besides being familiar with the contract and having knowledge about core principles such as Weingarten Rights and grievance procedures, it might be helpful to know a little about the history of your bargaining unit (i.e. why it formed and when) and the history of Local 17.

It is also good to know something about the bigger labor movement, which falls under the AFL-CIO, the umbrella organization for organized labor. Here is a summary of Local 17's history and the AFL-CIO.

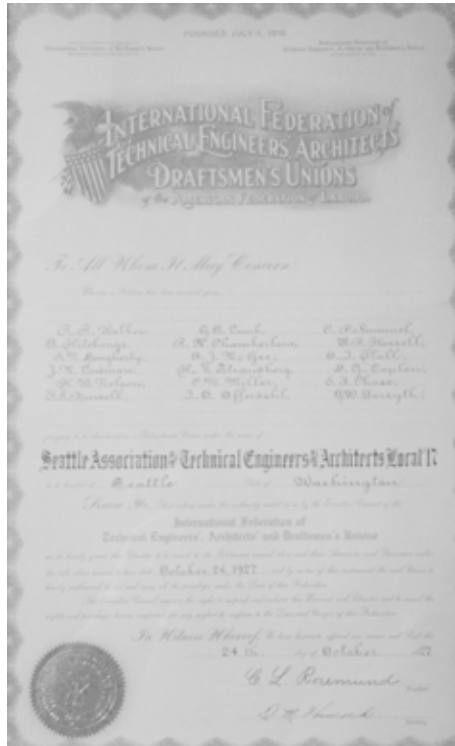
Why did Local 17 form?

Local 17 was first chartered in 1918 by a group of draftsmen employed in the Seattle shipyards. In 1927, about 100 City of Seattle engineers organized and formed the Seattle Association of Technical Engineers and Architects (S.A.T.E.&A.).

It was chartered by the International Federation of Technical Engineers, Architects and Draftsmen's Unions (I.F.T.E.A. & D.U.) as Local 17 on Oct. 24, 1927. The purpose of the union then, as now, is contained in the Local 17 constitution: "The objectives of this organization are to elevate the economic status of its members by establishing higher standards of skills, assisting in the securing of employment, improving the general working conditions, and securing by legal and recognized means, adequate and proper compensation."

Although first chartered to cover the Seattle area only, in 1941 Local 17 found that its problems were of a statewide nature and an organization covering all of Washington would be more effective than having several small locals. In 1942, the International granted Local 17 jurisdiction over the entire state of Washington with the exception of the jurisdictions of three other locals already in existence. The local's official name was changed to The Technical Engineers and Architects Association (T.E. & A.A.).

In the 1950's the International changed its name to the American Federation of Technical Engineers (A.F.T.E.), and the Local 17's name changed again to The Professional and Technical Engineers Association P.&T.E.A.).



Since the early 1970's, Local 17's face has changed to reflect the Northwest's cultural diversity. Due primarily to the accretion of a wider range of job classifications into already existing bargaining units, and a rapidly expanding public sector workforce, Local 17 has grown from 3,400 members in 1980 to nearly 8,500 today.

How the AFL-CIO Works:

In 1955, The American Federation of Labor merged with the Congress of Industrial Organizations—forming the AFL-CIO—putting an end to years of bitter political struggles within the labor movement.

The AFL-CIO is governed by a convention at which all AFL-CIO members are represented by elected delegates of its unions. Delegates set broad policies and goals for the movement and every four years. Delegates elect the AFL-CIO officers—president,

secretary-treasurer, executive vice president and 51 vice presidents. These officers make up the AFL-CIO Executive Council, which guides the daily work of the organization. The AFL-CIO General Board includes the Executive Council members, a chief officer of each affiliated union and the trade and industrial departments created by the AFL-CIO constitution and four regional representatives of the state AFL-CIO.

At the state level, state federations (i.e. Washington State Labor Council) coordinate with local unions and give working families a voice in every state capital through political and legislative activity. The state federations are led by officers and boards elected by delegates from local unions and are chartered by the national AFL-CIO.

Also chartered by the AFL-CIO are central labor councils (i.e. Pierce County Labor Council). These councils strengthen communities for working families and rebuild the union movement at the grassroots level. Central labor councils mobilize union members to support workers trying to form unions, to enhance workers political voice and to build stronger community alliances. — *By Bill Kalibak, Local 17 Union Representative*

Sources: "With Common Cause" (The Origins and Progress of Local 17 – 1919-1998); "How the AFL-CIO Works" (www.AFLCIO.com)