

## Why Union?

**A**s a steward, new members or members who have been in IFPTE Local 17 (AFL-CIO) for a number of years may ask, "What are the benefits of having a union?"

### Many Reasons

Being a member of a union provides a benefit that only employees with a union or a contract have today. Union members have a voice in the workplace and a contract (that employees negotiate) spelling out wages, benefits and conditions of employment.

As a union member, you have a legally binding labor contract that your employer is unable to unilaterally change without negotiating with the union. This allows you to be a part of the negotiation process. Additionally, the contract provides safeguards on wages, benefits and working conditions.

As a member of a union, you have greater access to legal, technical and organizational resources that allow for engaging with policymakers. Policymakers listen when members speak with one voice.

With almost 9,000 members, Local 17 is a part of an international union called, the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE). The International is comprised of professional, technical, and administrative employees in the United States and Canada. IFPTE represents professionals who work in the public, private and federal sectors. Among many responsibilities, the International represents member issues in Congress, i.e. lobbying to protect public employees' right to form unions.

Additionally, Local 17 has a voice in the International union being represented by two regional vice presidents: Local 17 President Allan Yamaguchi and Executive Director Joe McGee. In fact, McGee was recently elected as the Executive Vice President of the International. (See story on the front).

Local 17 is also affiliated with the AFL-CIO which serves as a large umbrella for labor organizations across the United States. As a member, the AFL-CIO gives you power, strength and unity in numbers. Local 17 is also a member of county and state labor councils, which also adds to lobbying and negotiating power.

Local 17 is a democratic organization. As elected by their peers, members help create policy for the local as member leaders on the Executive Board and also the Regional Executive Committee (REC). These leaders are accountable to the members of the organization as a whole.

Local 17 has staff members who provide legal, technical and political assistance to secure and enforce collective



Local 17 recently signed the 2007-2009 state collective bargaining agreement with Governor Gregoire.

bargaining agreements. Many staff members have law or other advanced degrees and are specialists in their field.

As a member of Local 17, you have a binding contract and an army of resources that work to increase and improve the wages, benefits and working conditions for all.

It is with your voice, your participation and your leadership, that Local 17 can continue to grow in strength and power at the negotiation table and in the workplace.

So, when someone asks you the question "why union?," remember the benefits of being in a union and a member of Local 17. Your short answer could be: "I am proud to be union!" Additionally, you can give the above reasons and specific things that having a union contract has benefited your work group, i.e. Classification Compensation (Class Comp) settlements or improvements to working conditions and benefits. – *By Adrienne Thompson, Local 17 Union Representative*

Regional Executive Committee (REC) delegates get sworn in. The REC shapes policy for the union.

