



FORE TIMES

News for the Western Washington Taxicab Operators Association (WWTCOA) - Teamsters Local 117

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TAXIS ACHIEVE TREMENDOUS BUDGET VICTORY IN SEATTLE

The WWTCOA Stops \$500k in Proposed Increases in Fines and Fees



Jagjit Singh of Orange Cab (r) and Gurminder Kahlon of Yellow Airport (l) testifying at the City of Seattle budget hearing on October 25.

Teamster taxicab operators are standing up, speaking out, and being heard.

At two recent City of Seattle budget hearings, taxi operators packed the room to voice their opposition to proposed increases in fines and fees that would hurt their ability to make ends meet.

"We wake up every day with the goal of putting food on the table for our families and providing the best possible service to the public, but these proposed increases are unfair and would put our livelihoods at risk," said Mohamed Salah, a 13-year driver with Yellow Airport.

Salah, who testified at the City hearings

held on October 4 and October 25, is an elected member of the newly-formed **Western Washington Taxicab Operators Association (WWTCOA)** Leadership Council. The Leadership Council has been working closely with the Teamsters Union to ease the regulatory burden in the industry and improve working conditions for Puget Sound taxi operators.

VIOLATIONS BY FOR-HIRE VEHICLES

At the hearings, taxi operators also addressed the City Council about the need for stronger enforcement of violations committed by the drivers of for-hire vehicles.

"The City isn't doing enough to protect

us from for-hire vehicles. They are taking our business," said Saidi Ofu, a driver with Yellow City, who has worked in the industry since 2000.

VICTORIES AT THE CITY OF SEATTLE

For taxis, speaking together with one voice at the hearings had a tremendous impact.

A majority of City Council members have now agreed not to increase fines or fees on taxicab operators this budget cycle. This represents a complete reversal from the Council's previous proposal to increase fees by nearly five-hundred thousand dollars. The Council also supports hiring two new inspectors who will investigate violations by for-hire vehicles.

"This is a great moment for Seattle-area taxicab operators," said Dawn Gearhart, Teamsters Local 117 Business Representative. "They now realize that if they are organized and if they stand together and speak up, their concerns will be heard."

Join the WWTCOA!

BUILD POWER IN THE TAXICAB INDUSTRY - BECOME A MEMBER!

The **Western Washington Taxicab Operators Association** is your opportunity to get organized, speak with one voice and work together with the Teamsters Union to improve conditions in the taxicab industry.

To become a member or if you would like to help recruit new members, please contact Dawn Gearhart at 206-794-6678.

WWTCOA ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Since its founding this year, the Western Washington Taxi Cab Operators Association (WWTCOA) has worked with the Teamsters to achieve a number of important victories including:

1. TAXICAB VICTORY AT THE SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL

WWTCOA members packed two recent City of Seattle budget hearings and, with the help of the Teamsters, successfully stopped a recent proposal that would have increased fines and fees for taxicab operators by five-hundred thousand dollars.

2. INSURANCE RATE INCREASES UNDER INVESTIGATION

Local 117 has filed a complaint with the Washington State Insurance Commissioner's Office on behalf of taxicab operators after rates went up 41% in September. The Office is investigating to determine if the rate increases were unlawful.

3. LEGAL ACTION AGAINST THE PAN PACIFIC HOTEL

The Teamsters Legal Department is moving forward with a class-action lawsuit against the Pan Pacific Hotel for knowingly allowing flat-rate drivers to solicit fares in areas designated for taxis only. The WWTCOA is also in the process of drafting a letter to other downtown hotels to provide notice of the pending lawsuit.

4. TAXICAB VICTORY AT THE AIRPORT

The Teamsters Legal Department has fought to achieve permanent access by representatives of the Teamsters Union to visit taxicab operators at the airport.

5. LABOR & INDUSTRIES FEES

WWTCOA and Teamster representatives spoke out at a recent L&I hearing to raise awareness about the unfair L&I fees and the mandatory L&I requirement for taxis.

6. MEETINGS WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS TAXI ISSUES

Representatives of the WWTCOA and the Teamsters have recently met with the following public officials to discuss taxi-related issues:

- Jay Inslee - Governor Elect
- Bob Ferguson - Attorney General Elect
- Vicki Kennedy - Chief Policy Analyst, Labor & Industries
- Mike Kriedler - WA State Insurance Commissioner
- City Council Members: Nick Licata, Bruce Harrell, Tim Burgess, Mike O'Brien, Jean Godden, Sally Clark, Rich Conlin, Sally Bagshaw

Upcoming meetings are scheduled with: Congressman Jim McDermott, Representative Dave Upthegrove, and King County Councilmember Larry Gossett.

7. REPRESENTATION ON THE TAXICAB ADVISORY COMMISSION

With the appointment of Jagjit Singh of Orange Taxi, the WWTCOA has helped secure representation on the Seattle-King County Taxicab Advisory Commission.

8. NEW WWTCOA MEMBERS = INDUSTRY POWER

Taxicab operators are signing up in droves to become members of the WWTCOA. The more members in the Association, the more power taxis have to defend their rights. *If you are not a member or would like to help recruit new members, talk to Local 117 Business Representative Dawn Gearhart at 206-794-6678.*

PHOTOS FROM THE CITY OF SEATTLE BUDGET HEARING ON OCT. 25



Announcements

WWTCOA LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

MEETING: The next WWTCOA Leadership Committee meeting will be held on November 15 at 4:30PM. If you have issues you would like discussed at the meeting, talk to a WWTCOA Leadership Council member.

MEMBER DUES: The next member dues deduction will take place on Nov. 20. Look for "WWTCOA" on your credit card statement. If you have questions, please contact Dawn Gearhart at 206-794-6678.

Download an electronic copy of the FARE TIMES at www.teamsters117.org.