## President's State of the Union address

## August 6, 2016

I would like to begin this morning by first reporting to you about the SEIU International convention that was held in Detroit this past May. PSE sent 10 elected delegates to represent our Local, 1948. We attended the Public Services Division meeting on Saturday where round table discussions were held on Creating the Next Forms of Worker Power, Building a Wider Movement, and Innovation in our Union. The convention opened on Sunday with an inspiring address from our President Mary Kay Henry titled "The Moment We Are In". She has that wonderful capability of making us all feel that we are truly brothers and sisters and how we are stronger

because of our union family. Her vision for a "just society" is leading us forward.

SEIU members, like us, and working families are concerned that financial security is becoming more difficult. A majority of our states have now passed laws making it more difficult to form, fund, and sustain unions. Because our voices have been weakened, the economy is out of balance. Did you know that almost 1 in 2 working Americans makes less than \$15 an hour? How many of our PSE members have to work two jobs to feed their families? More of us work part time, just under the threshold for benefits and retirement. There is a saying by Henry Ford; that you need to pay workers well enough to be consumers. That's why he paid an unheard of \$5 a day.

To create that next form of worker power, we need to help build a movement of campaigns to raise wages and work standards. We need to be vigilant that Washington State does not become the next "Right to Work" state. And we need to elect candidates that support working families. We want to improve the quality of life not only for our members but our communities as well.

A "just society" also means that the union movement must unite around economic, racial, immigrant, and environmental justice. This "wider movement" unites us in a partnership with other people to expose the flaws impacting all of our lives.

Washington State has a regressive tax code system where citizens with modest incomes pay more of their total income than the wealthy do, no one can afford a house let alone rent one, and my college graduate, saddled with student debt, still

lives at home because her income won't support the American dream of home ownership. We only have to look around our country today to see the structural racism that is erupting in tension and fear. I have been deeply saddened by the recent murders in Texas, Louisiana, and Minnesota. I understand that President Barrack Obama has addressed the nation 17 times in his two terms of office on these tragedies. This structural racism and inequality is felt in our schools, banking systems, voter suppression, and in our communities. Immigration reform is needed as well. We have students in our schools who are fearful that their parents may be deported and separated from them. These are productive members of our society, they pay taxes and support their communities. This is not just.

Environmental justice goes right along with climate change.

Extreme weather has caused devastating forest fires in

Washington, low snow packs for our water supply, and habitat loss. Sometimes special interests have a direct impact on our environment like unsafe drinking water, not only Flint,

Michigan but in our own local schools. All of those things impact our lives and we need to work together so that our communities can be healthy and rebuild or recover.

A wider movement unites all people on these issues, and our union is a part of the solution.

An important challenge for internal organizing for PSE was brought to light with a possible legislative ruling on Friedrichs v California Teachers Association. This case was heard by the US Supreme court this year. Teacher, Rebecca Friedrichs claimed that it was against her right to freedom of speech to be compelled to pay her fare share fee to the union when she

didn't agree with its political work. The Supreme Court was split evenly in its decision which upheld a lower court ruling against the plaintiff, because of the sudden death of Justice Scalia. In June, the court decided not to rehear the case when a ninth justice will finally be appointed. A victory for unions... yes, for the moment. If this decision had been ruled for the plaintiff, it would have devastated all public sector unions like ours. PSE learned that if we were to survive and thrive as a voluntary organization, we needed to be innovative and reach out to our membership to build a better union culture with added value for all members. We created a new Belong and Be Strong campaign to reach out to our members; to let them know that others felt the way they did, and we are in it together to win. This approach has created new opportunities for our members to become leaders and create those networks that are needed

to make PSE relevant to all of our members. We can share learning and best practices to win for everyone from Aberdeen to Deer Park.

Other resolutions at the SEIU convention were passed; creating a new partnership with AFSCME, calling for improvements and expansion of social security, and a new SEIU retirees program.

The convention ended with a plan to win which includes the fight for fifteen and a union, electing Hillary Clinton to champion our issues at the national level, working with external partners for justice, and strengthening fund raising for COPE.

PSE has worked hard this year on many other fronts.

In Olympia this year, we fought back 13 bills that would have impacted us as a union; two were specifically proposed to make Washington a right to work state.

We also responded to the Freedom Foundation attacks that are happening here in Washington. This organization promotes opting out of unions and give yourself a raise by not paying dues. I heard a military term once, "You know you're on target when you take flak, so don't give up on the mission." We must be on target!

I am sorry to say that again our "paraeducator" bill to make our work a respected profession, did not pass. But working with the State PTA and the Special Education community, it will come back again.

We held our TEAM conference this year in Kennewick. TEAM 1 and TEAM 2 met simultaneously to learn from a progressively designed curriculum and came together to hear two inspiring speakers. We learned a lot about communicating with each

other from our guest speaker, Galen Emanuele. He had us laughing and learning at the same time. It was great! One of the highlights of the weekend was to hear Eliseo Medina, the former Secretary/Treasurer of SEIU. He told his story of being a union activist since he was 19 years old, when he worked alongside of Caesar Chavez during the grape boycott. Our members lined up to speak with him after his presentation. He graciously let people take pictures with him. He is a rock star of the union world!

PSE has become a bigger influence in Washington DC. Last May, we lobbied our Congressmen and Congresswomen, and I'm happy to say that all of them signed onto our bill to create a National Classified School Employee of the Year Award. Much like the National Teacher of the year award. We have worked hard with our coalition partners, the NCCESEU (national

coalition of classified education support employee unions-2xMN,Ohio, CSEA, PSE, Utah, NEA) to make this happen. This legislation hasn't passed as of yet. The Champion of Change event at the White House was lobbied for by this group also. I'm so proud that two of our members were chosen to be champions, Doris Hominda and Ed Ammons. I hope you (red) read about their honor on the PSE web site and social media page. We also lobbied Senator Patty Murray, and she included the term Paraeducator in the rules for the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced the No Child Left Behind Act. Because this term is now included, it nationally recognizes the value that paras have in the delivery of education services. All of our work is the base that makes the future possible. We will continue to look for innovation, evaluate where we are and where we are going, knowing it is all for the best outcome. We

will continue to reach out to every member and be the best school support professional's organization. Last year I told you that you were all sparks and that together we are a fireball.......well......the fuse has been lit! Thank you!