

# History of WPEA

A Brief Summary of Events

## Since 1956

**Founded in 1956**, the Washington State Employees Association was created by a group of employees who wanted a new kind of labor organization. They were dissatisfied with the representation they were receiving from the Washington Federation of State Employees, particularly WFSE's narrow focus on the needs of social service employees. WSEA's founders wanted something different – an organization that would represent their interests, their way. This spirit of independence would become a hallmark of WPEA's history.

**During the 1970's**, WSEA began shifting toward a more traditional "labor union" model, negotiating its first collective bargaining agreements and endorsing "union shop" provisions. WSEA's membership also declined during this period, as many members found themselves in newly-created WFSE bargaining units.

**In 1975**, WSEA changed its name to the Washington Public Employees Association to reflect a broader mission of representing public employees outside state government, such as those at Fort Vancouver Regional Library.

**In 1977**, WPEA conducted the only state employee labor strike in Washington state history. This two-day action against then-governor Dixie Lee Ray was instrumental in winning salary increases for all state employees. In the 1977-1979 budget the legislature proposed a 7% increase for state employees (In 1977) and a 6% increase the following year. However, WPEA members demanded 20% across the board in order to catch up with workers in the private sector and at other public employers who were performing similar work.

After the strike - The first ever strike by state employees in Washington - WPEA members agreed to 15% over the course of the next two years. WPEA pickets "effectively

closed 32 state parks, slowed port operations at Port Angeles, Aberdeen, and Bellingham, halted logging briefly, and slowed operations at the state Revenue, Natural Resources and Game departments. Seven community colleges were [also] picketed." - *The Daily News*, June 28, 1977

**During the 1980's**, WPEA turned its attention to winning full collective bargaining rights for state employees. This effort began with a "Dignity Day" march in 1982, and continued with a series of bills introduced in the State Legislature. WPEA was a leader in this cause, at a time when other state employee unions preferred "business as usual."

**During the 1990's**, WPEA returned to its roots as a lobbying organization, mobilizing members around health benefits funding, pension improvements, and closing the state employee "pay gap." Through these efforts, WPEA became a force to be reckoned with in state politics.

**In 2002**, WPEA's twenty-year campaign for full collective bargaining rights finally became a reality, when the state legislature passed the Personnel System Reform Act, SHB 1268. This historic bill signaled the end of an era of "collective begging."

**In 2003**, after nearly fifty years as an independent association, WPEA members voted to affiliate with the United Food and Commercial Workers, a diverse international union with 1.4 million members nationwide.

**In 2016**, WPEA celebrated 60 years of serving public employees. As we reach to the future of labor unions it is important to understand the fight public employees have endured for better pay, better benefits and a better way of life.



# Members of WPEA

Representing 4,500 Employees throughout Washington

## Center for Childhood Deafness and Hearing Loss

All Classified (excludes supervisors)

## Department of Agriculture

Food Safety and Pesticide Management

## Department of Revenue

Agency-wide

## Department of Natural Resources

Classified by specific job class  
Supervisors by specific job class

## Department of Licensing

Investigators

## Liquor and Cannabis Board

Licensing Specialists  
Technical, Clerical, Professional

## Military Department

Trades and Security

## Washington State Patrol

Electronic Services Section  
Fire Marshals Unit  
Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Supervisors  
Communication Supervisors  
Fleet Services Division  
Technical Services Bureau Supervisors

## Washington State School for the Blind

All Classified (excludes supervisors)

## Fort Vancouver Regional Library

All non-supervisory support staff

## Kitsap Regional Library

Librarians

## Grays Harbor Transit



## Bellevue College

All Classified (excludes custodians, guards, and maintenance)

## Big Bend Community College

IT Classified (excludes supervisors)

## Cascadia College

All Classified (excludes supervisors)

## Clark College

All classified

## Columbia Basin College

All classified (excludes supervisors)

## Edmonds Community College

All classified

## Grays Harbor College

All classified (excludes supervisors)

## Highline College

All Classified (excludes supervisors)

## Olympic College

All classified

## Pierce College

All classified

## Skagit Valley College

All classified

## Tacoma Community College

Custodial and Maintenance  
(excludes supervisors)

## Walla Walla Community College

All classified

## Wenatchee Valley College

All Classified

## Yakima Valley Community College

Classified (excludes supervisors)

# Working Conditions

Understanding changes in working conditions



One of the protections offered by collective bargaining law is the right to bargain changes in working conditions. Collective bargaining law requires employers to bargain in good faith with the union and is written into the Revised Code of Washington, under article 41.80.

It is reasonable to expect some changes in the workplace during the contract period. But if those changes affect wages, hours, or working conditions (known as **mandatory subjects**), the

## Example

This winter, employees at a community college returned to find a break room gone. Facilities had converted it into a prep room for a lab class. When employees notified their shop steward, she quickly investigated the situation. She found that neither the union nor Human Resources were aware of the change in working conditions.

The steward called her staff representative, and together they informed HR that the union could file an Unfair Labor Practice charge over

employer is required to notify the union in advance. It is not enough to notify employees/members and it is unlawful to notify the union after the change has occurred.

There are times when the employer makes a change without notifying the union, and it can be difficult for employees to know what changes should be bargained. If you notice a change at your workplace, contact your shop steward or staff representative as soon as possible.

the change and lack of notification.

As a result, the college is building a new break room, downstairs from the old one. They identified an underused office space and are putting in furniture and appliances for a new break room.

If members hadn't notified a steward or staff rep about this change in conditions, they probably would have lost a break room. It's important to let your representative know about change, in case they can be bargained.

## Examples of mandatory subjects include:

- Dress codes
- Drug/alcohol testing
- Elimination of positions
- Employee privileges (right to listen to radio, receive phone calls, smoke, etc.)
- Layoffs for economic reasons
- Meal or coffee break rules
- Outside employment rules
- Parking rules
- Pay check procedures
- Production quotas
- Safety and health rules
- Smoking rules
- Subcontracting decisions (not including decisions based on a change in the scope or direction of the enterprise)
- Tardiness rules
- Work schedules

# Join the PAC!

As public employees, WPEA members are directly affected by the decisions made in Olympia. WPEA's **Political Action Committee** works to make sure we elect the best people to make those decisions. These are the people who vote to fund our contracts, our pensions, and our healthcare.

Donate now and **show your PAC pride** with a limited-edition WPEA sweatshirt. Your contribution will help WPEA's champions win tough campaigns so they can stand up for public employees in Olympia.

With a **one-time donation of \$60** or **monthly donations of at least \$15**, you can choose from one of the new WPEA hoodies. Made in the USA and union-printed, the sweatshirts come in two styles: a lightweight zip-up and a fleece pullover.

Simply attach your one-time donation or complete the form below, and return it to WPEA. Be sure to include contact information.



Yes, I would like a WPEA hoodie. Please email more information at \_\_\_\_\_

For more information, contact Seamus Petrie at [seamus@wpea.org](mailto:seamus@wpea.org) or 360-943-1121 x116.

## Agreement for Pre-Authorized Electronic Fund Payment

I hereby authorize the Washington Public Employees Association PAC Fund to initiate debit entries to my checking or savings account indicated below at my bank or credit union named below, to debit the same to such account, the following amount each pay period (on the 10th and 25th of each month):

\$3    \$5    \$7.50\*    \$15    \$\_\_\_\_\_

Please attach a voided personal check and complete the information below:

**Account type**       Checking       Savings

Bank/credit union name

Branch location

State

City

Zip code

\*Donations at this level (\$15/month) and above are eligible for the WPEA hoodie.

This authority is to remain in full force and effect until WPEA PAC Fund and my bank or credit union have received written notification from me of its termination in such time and in such manner as to afford WPEA PAC Fund and my bank or credit union a reasonable opportunity to act on it.

Printed name

Employer (agency/college/library)

Occupation

Signature

Date

One-time contributions and completed pre-authorization forms can be sent to:

WPEA PAC Fund  
140 Percival Street NW  
Olympia, WA 98502

*Please do not send to your bank.*

WPEA Organization ID Number 13606374

# Shop Stewards

First Line of Defense

Find Yours Online at [www.WPEA.org](http://www.WPEA.org)

Shop stewards, have the opportunity to advocate for workplace rights and represent their coworkers in meetings with management. Stewards play a key role in identifying workplace issues and enforcing the labor contract. Shop stewards bring many different skills, talents, backgrounds and personalities to their work. Some stewards excel in management diplomacy, while others prefer assisting individual members. Some favor a more visible role, while others prefer to work behind-the-scenes. With their combined energy, enthusiasm and commitment, WPEA shop stewards are the **foundation of a strong union.**

## Roles of a shop steward

- Advise members who are having work-related problems
  - Assist members in matters such as performance evaluations and reallocations
  - Educate members about workplace rights and contract provisions
  - Identify workplace issues so that the union can take action on behalf of members
  - Assist union staff in facilitating union meetings and making strategic decisions on behalf of the bargaining unit
  - Serve in leadership positions such as labor-management team, bargaining team, and union elected offices
- Contact your WPEA staff representative or chief shop steward if you are interested in shop steward training.

## Your Weingarten Rights

Know Where You Stand

Keep This With You

Established by the Supreme Court's 1975 decision, *NLRB v. J. Weingarten, Inc.*, Weingarten Rights give all unionized employees the right to union representation during any investigatory interview. These fundamental union rights protect employees from unfair and/or abusive treatment by management. *The NLRB does not currently afford these rights to nonunionized workplaces.*

### Weingarten Basics

- The Weingarten Rights only apply to meetings where the employee believes that discipline or other adverse action could result.
- The Weingarten Rights do NOT apply to "run-of-the-mill shop-floor conversations," such as issuing instructions, assigning work, or administering training.
- Management is NOT obligated to inform the employee of their Weingarten Rights. Rather, the employee must already know about their Weingarten Rights and make a clear request for union representation.
- If an employee clearly requests union representation and management refuses, then the employee may refuse to answer questions. The employee may NOT unilaterally end the interview, but may decline to answer questions until a Shop Steward is provided.
- An employee may request a Shop Steward of their choice, but if that person is not available, management may insist on proceeding with the interview as long as another Shop Steward is available.

Weingarten does NOT give employees "the right to remain silent." An employee who is being questioned by management must answer fully and truthfully. If they refuse or fail to do so, then they may be charged with insubordination.

WPEA's Master Agreements contain language that expands and reinforces the representation rights afforded by Weingarten. The Master Agreements state, "Upon request, employees will have the right to representation at all levels on any matter adversely affecting their conditions of employment."