



Report from Olympia No. 9

Teamsters Local 117

News for DOC Teamsters - 2012 Legislative Session in Olympia

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OFFICER UNIFORM BILL PASSES SENATE 45-3!

HB 2346 may be on the way to Governor's desk to be signed into law



Local 117 members gather at the State Capitol for Teamsters Lobby Day on February 23.

In a tremendous victory for Teamsters at the DOC, the State Senate passed a bill on Wednesday, February 29 that would exempt correctional officers from wearing uniforms made by inmates.

For years, correctional officers and sergeants in our State's prisons have endured the humiliation of faulty, unprofessional uniforms. Correctional staff have grudgingly dealt with buttons popping off their shirts, seams in their pants bursting, and chuckles from the offenders they supervise.

MORE PROFESSIONAL UNIFORMS

Now, with the passage of HB 2346 out of the Senate on a vote of 45-3, it is very possible that those days are numbered.

Under the bill, the DOC will be required to provide uniforms for its officers and sergeants from outside vendors, such as Blumenthal's, the company that manufactures uniforms for the State Patrol.

HB 2346 reads, "Under no circumstance shall offenders under the custody of the department of corrections make or assemble uniforms to be worn by Washington state correctional officers."

LOCAL 117 MEMBERS SHINE IN COMMITTEE

The victory in the Senate follows a House vote of 92-3 in favor of the bill and a couple of tense committee hearings.

Dozens of members of Local 117 from across the State took time off work to attend the Human Services & Corrections hearing on February 23 and the Ways & Means committee hearing on February 27.

Members faced tough questions from legislators on the committees. Several legislators were especially concerned about the loss of jobs for inmates.

But while acknowledging the need to keep inmates busy, members made a strong case for uniforms:

"Our presence, our professionalism, and the way we look play a huge part in the authority that we have," said Greg McCombs, a Sergeant at the Coyote Ridge Correctional Complex.

"We are assaulted in those uniforms and have been murdered in those uniforms. Our uniforms need to be professionally made," said Robert Stricker, a Classification Counselor at the Larch Corrections Center.

In the end, DOC Teamsters were able to persuade legislators that passing the bill will boost morale, improve uniform quality, and create a safer work environment for staff in our prisons.

JUST A FEW STEPS REMAIN

A few short steps remain before the bill can become law. Now that HB 2346 has passed the Senate, it goes back to the House for concurrence. The Senate and House budgets must then be reconciled to include funding for the bill.

At that point, it goes to the Governor's desk for signature. The Governor has 20 days to sign the bill.

Tremendous thanks to all of the Teamsters who testified, lobbied, emailed and called their legislators to voice their support of the bill.

Thanks also to Local 117's political action team, Teresita Torres and Lily Wilson-Codega, for their incredible work.

Teresita has been on the ground every day during session working behind the scenes; Lily has been working with members across the state, many of whom answered the call at critical junctures this session to leverage key votes on the bill.

In all, over 150 members, including many Teamsters working in the public and private sectors, testified in committee hearings and lobbied for the bill.

We will continue to keep you posted about the status of the bill. In the meantime, congratulations to everyone for all of your hard work in getting one critical step closer to higher quality, more professional uniforms for our State's correctional officers!