

Union Members Stand Against Rollback of Police Accountability in SPOG Contract

We, the undersigned Seattle-area union members, fully support fair pay for Seattle police officers. The wage increases their union, the Seattle Police Officers Guild (SPOG), has negotiated with the City are overdue, with the officers not having received raises since 2014.

Nonetheless, we urge Seattle City Council to reject the proposed contract between the City and SPOG, because the agreement undermines and rolls back the hard-won, but still all-too-limited, accountability reforms contained in the 2017 law passed unanimously by this same City Council. These accountability reforms protect the civil rights of all working people, including union members, in our community.

We urge the City Council to call on the mayor and SPOG expeditiously to return to the bargaining table and renegotiate and remove those portions of the agreement that contradict or undermine the 2017 accountability legislation. In doing so, the parties will be demonstrating that we can have both the pay raises and the urgently needed police accountability measures that were spelled out in the 2017 legislation.

Those who assert that the Council must approve the agreement in its entirety because the police officers deserve their raises are trying to force a false choice on the Council. The rights of community members, as enshrined in the 2017 law, are not bargaining chips to be traded away. Indeed, with expedited renegotiations, the parties can bargain an agreement that provides pay raises and protects accountability and rights.

In calling on the mayor and SPOG to renegotiate the agreement, we stand proudly with a diverse coalition of more than two dozen leading community groups, including the Seattle/King County NAACP, the Church Council of Greater Seattle, OneAmerica, Casa Latina, Not This Time, El Centro De La Raza, the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, the American Civil Liberties Union, Creative Justice, Africa Town, Mothers for Police Accountability, Asian Counseling and Referral Service, Latino Civic Alliance, SeaMar, and the Community Police Commission, among others. Many of these groups represent Seattle's communities of color, who historically have experienced greater barriers to police services and accountability, and have disproportionately experienced biased policing and excessive use of force. They represent working people, including many union members. Their voices must be heard.

The history of our labor movement demonstrates that unions are strongest when we stand shoulder to shoulder with community allies because we recognize that we must defend the rights of workers both at work and in the community. Our unity with these community voices, in opposition to the proposed SPOG contract as it is currently constructed, follows in that great tradition.

And as we urge the city to return to the negotiating table with SPOG, we also call on city leaders to join us in seriously addressing the underlying causes of civil rights violations in the community, including the vast and growing economic inequality in Seattle, the growing housing affordability and homelessness crisis, persistent systemic racist practices that continue today, and the city's failure to address the need for progressive revenue to fund housing and other vital public services.

Research has consistently demonstrated that disciplinary reforms without systemic changes that address underlying economic and political conditions of racism will not create substantial

improvements, but in fact greater harm.

We urge you, the Council members, to join with the community in calling for renegotiation of the City-SPOG agreement.

Sincerely,

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Salvador Castillo, Vice President, WFSE Local 1488*

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* Signing in a personal capacity