

Olympia Needs a Workers' Bill of Rights

Letter to Olympia City Council from the **Thurston-Lewis-Mason Central Labor Council** and **United Food and Commercial Workers Local 367**

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

We are writing to ask you to pass a robust Workers' Bill of Rights in Olympia or to offer your support for a citizens' initiative. This is an opportunity for the Olympia City Council to provide early leadership within the wider movement to expand worker protections across the South Puget Sound and statewide.

Wages have not kept up with the rising cost of living. MIT calculates that [a living wage in Olympia is \\$24/hr](#) for a single adult working full-time, or \$41/hr to support one child and one adult. Worse still, most of the big retail, grocery, and food service corporations are adopting a "flexible" employment model, meaning fewer and fewer full-time positions. Instead, these corporations are forcing a growing number of workers to accept unstable, unpredictable part-time hours. Skeleton crews create unsafe conditions and pressure workers to cut corners.

On July 20th we held a Workers's Rights Summit in Olympia attended by nearly 100 workers and community allies. Workers in our community offered harrowing testimony about their struggle to survive in our local economy. In the months ahead, we intend to share these and other stories with you to show the human face of Olympia's affordability crisis.

Two years ago Olympia City Council adopted "[Olympia Strong: A Roadmap to Economic Opportunities](#)." The first goal of this Roadmap listed on the City's website is to "Elevate more people of all backgrounds and abilities into financial stability and help people overcome economic hardships." There are no shortcuts to achieving these urgent goals. Without passing robust legal protections for workers in Olympia, there is little reason to hope conditions will improve.

The message coming out of the Workers' Rights Summit was clear: Olympia needs to raise the minimum wage, ensure fair scheduling, and improve workplace safety. Below we outline the policies being called for by union members, unorganized workers, and our growing community coalition.

Our campaign is preparing to place ballot initiatives before voters in November 2025 to pass a Workers' Bill of Rights in both Olympia and Tacoma as part of a broader campaign to strengthen protections across our region and statewide. However, we welcome the interest expressed by a number of Olympia city council members to pass a strong and comprehensive ordinance instead.

Sincerely,

Michael Hines, President of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 367

Rachelle Martin, President of the Thurston Lewis Mason Central Labor Council

What a WORKERS' BILL OF RIGHTS must include:

\$20.29 Minimum Wage That Rises with Inflation

- \$20.29 is the standard set for large employers by King County, and it is scheduled to rise with inflation on January 1st of each year. Small and medium-sized businesses have a 3–6-year phase-in. Anything less than this standard fails to meet worker's needs.

Enough Hours for a Livable Paycheck

- Before hiring additional workers, employers must offer existing employees up to full-time work.
- Guaranteed access to full-time jobs for most employees at large national grocery chains.

Stable and Predictable Schedules

- Good-faith estimate of hours at time of hiring, including anticipated shifts each week.
- Minimum of 14 days notice for schedules. Employees have the right to refuse on-call shifts requested by the employer after the 14-day notice.
- Predictability pay for schedule changes after the 14-day notice of schedules: Employees will be paid 50% of their wages for any hours cut and will be paid time-and-a-half for on-call shifts or additional hours worked.
- No "clopening" shifts: Employees have the right to refuse shifts without a minimum of 10 hours rest between them. When employees accept shifts with less than 10 hours rest, they will be paid time-and-a-half for work during the 10-hour rest period.
- Right to request schedule changes: Workers can request changes to their schedules as their life circumstances change, and employers are obligated to make a good faith effort to meet those requests.

Safe Workplaces

- Large retail employers must adopt a workplace violence prevention policy that identifies factors that put workers at risk of violence, and outlines methods to prevent violence.
- Large employers must provide annual training for employees on de-escalation tactics, live active shooter drills, emergency procedures, use of panic buttons and more.
- All retail employers with more than 500 employees nationwide must install panic buttons at easily accessible locations or offer wearable or mobile-phone based panic buttons to all employees. Pressing the panic button immediately contacts 9-1-1.
- Employers with collective bargaining agreements must invite a union representative to provide safety training to all employees to new hires within and annually thereafter.

Protection Against Unjust Terminations

- Universal Just Cause protections against termination: Employers can only discipline and/or discharge workers after a fair process and for legitimate, provable reasons.
- Employers are prohibited from disciplining or firing workers based on lawful off-the-job use of cannabis without proof of intoxication at work.

Enforcement

- When employees take legal action for violations of their workplace rights the burden of proof is on employers.
- Strengthen private right of action and create stiff civil penalties for employers found to be in violation of local labor laws. Introduce fee shifting to ensure attorneys will take on credible cases for workers, regardless of their ability to pay out-of-pocket.
- Empower statewide agencies to investigate and enforce local labor laws: Olympia City Council should formally request the state to take action, or work toward establishing a municipal Office of Labor Standards, to crack down on widespread wage theft and enforce local labor laws.

X *Michael Hines*

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President – UFCW Local 367

X *Rachelle Martin*

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