

Workers Now Have a Voice

A new and energetic pro-worker, pro-union group in Northwest Washington has been exploring ways to get its message out to the public. The Labor-Democrat Work Group, as it calls itself, is comprised of Democrats and members from 16 local unions. This alliance recognizes that most of the media is controlled by corporations. For this reason, the group decided to use other outlets to reach its audience. Its purpose is to promote policies and projects that benefit the entire working class.

One of the Work Group's goals to reach out to the local community was achieved when the Skagit Human Rights Festival invited Labor to give a two-hour presentation at the Lincoln Theatre in Mount Vernon, March 29, 7pm. The Skagit Human Rights Festival is comprised of four, Thursday evenings dedicated to exploring national and international issues that impact people of Skagit Valley.

The SHRF committee understood that because Unions were being attacked by federal and state governments and by corporations, Skagit County's citizens needed to hear from Labor, now, to understand what Unions have done for workers and the importance of not only preserving unions but also the need to strengthen workers right to collective bargaining.

The Labor organizing committee will create a notable evening by showing two short labor films - *We are the ILWU* and *Eyes on the Fries*. The first film recognizes that a decent job, free of discrimination, is a human right and that unity is the key to social and economic justice for all. The second film is about the service sector economy and the young people who work in it - the McJob economy.

The evening will also include Jeff Johnson, President of Washington State Labor Council, speaking about how unions continue to champion the rights of all workers, organized or not. Finally, there will be a panel of young activists who will talk about the importance of organizing and the need for involvement in the struggle for a fair and safe workplace as well as respect for workers and adequate compensation. As labor is vilified in some political circles, join us for an evening to learn about the importance of unions. They brought us child labor laws and a 40-hour, 5-day work week. What is happening with them today?

The Labor-Democrat Work Group also launched a Labor Radio program called "We Do The Work." Its first show airs Monday, January 2, 5 pm, as part of Skagit Talks at KSVR 91.7 FM. The inaugural interview will feature Jeff Johnson, President of the Washington State Labor Council. He'll talk about the importance of unions and how they benefit the entire working class.

The show is hosted by Rich Austin, a retired member of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. Audio, editing, and other technical duties will be performed by Janet McKinney, a retired member of Operating Engineers Local 302. They said: "The time to act is now. Supporting fellow workers and collective bargaining rights is especially urgent after what happened to working people in Wisconsin and to public workers here in Washington. In addition to that, working men and women cannot rely on mainstream media or elected officials for the whole story. We must search elsewhere to get all the facts in order to make informed decisions."

Upcoming topics will feature:

- Lori Wallach, Director of Global Trade Watch - Public Citizen, will expose how so-called “free trade” agreements like NAFTA continue to punish U.S. workers.
- Robby Sterns, of Social Security Works – Washington, will tell the truth about Social Security. (Hint: It *is* solvent!)
- Mark Dudzic, National Coordinator of the Labor Campaign for Single-Payer, will inform how and why the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act falls far short of the health care reform that is so urgently needed in our nation, and what can be done to assure that everyone will have access to the care they need.
- Walmart workers who voluntarily joined the OURWalmart campaign will reveal the work conditions at Walmart and how the OURWalmart campaign proposes to convince Walmart to treat its employees with respect and to provide them with adequate wages and benefits.
- Steve Garey, President of United Steel Workers Local 12-591, will explain how unions are good for our communities, and he will tell us that workers are not responsible for the prices we all pay at gas pumps.
- Rick DeBay, member of the Washington Federation of State Employees, will provide listeners with some cold hard facts about why budget cuts to Community Corrections (probation and parole officers) will undermine community safety, and how budget cuts to other state programs will also hurt our communities.

The aim of “We Do The Work” is to bring information that is vital to workers. The program’s creators believe everyone deserves to be treated fairly and each of us should have the opportunity to live in economic security with dignity and respect. Issues that will be discussed will range from free trade agreements to health care, from jobs to corporate accountability, and from security in retirement to legislative deception.

If all goes well, KSVR’s General Manager Rip Robbins wants “We Do The Work” to have its own 28 minute dedicated program each week. KSVR is committed to providing local, national, and global news and information to listeners in the Skagit Community and beyond in both English and Spanish.

Listen to *We Do The Work*, within *Skagit Talks*, Mondays, 5 pm, at KSVR, 91.7 FM or for live streaming go to [Live Broadcast of KSVR programs](#). To hear the previous two weeks’ programs that are archived, go to [Older Broadcasts of We Do The Work within Skagit Talks](#). Questions about interviews? Email ksvrwedothework@gmail.com

Together we will learn what we can do to bring about social and economic justice for all