



Upcoming Union Events in "The Month Ahead"

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Pick up some swag at the union hall and support the Benevolent Fund!



PLEASE CONSIDER DONATING TO THE L29 BENEVOLENT FUND.

THE WORKER



PRESIDENT
RANDY MARLER

President's Message

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I want to thank so many of you who continue to support one another by making voluntary contributions to the PACs. This is the work that sets the stage for monumental changes that have occurred in our line of work.

“Why Politics?”

1967 - Collective Bargaining becomes Law

1970 – LEOFF Pension created. (a pretty popular benefit we have)

1973 – Binding Arbitration. Forces the employer to reach an agreement with us, or a 3rd party will do it for them. Most of the Country is still fighting for this.

1982 – Our first Presumptive Disease passed into law for Lung disease.

1996 – Benefits to Beneficiaries gave financial contribution to the family of a fallen member along with college tuition for children.

2002 – LEOFF 2 Board established that stabilized our Pension and helped make our Pension the best-funded and most stable Pension Plan in the Country.

Those are just a few of the big ones and the ones that we have expanded upon over the past 20 years. For example, we expanded Presumptive diseases to include Cancer Presumption Laws and recognizing the increased risk of certain types of cancers among firefighters. Likewise, legislation now recognizes PTSD as a condition that can be considered an occupational disease for firefighters, providing us with better access to treatment. Beyond cancers and PTSD, we have expanding presumptive laws to cover other illnesses believed to be contracted due to the nature of firefighting work, such as heart and lung conditions commonly found in firefighters, thereby simplifying the process for us to receive medical coverage and benefits. Education Benefits have been expanded for Children and Spouses to increase the death benefit and remove the penalty for getting remarried.

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Enhanced Retirement Benefits: Thanks to work in 2002, we received an enhancement of .5% for years 15-25, which gives an additional 5% increase to your pension if you work beyond 25 years. This is the equivalent of being able to retire 2.5 years earlier if you need to or go the same distance and increase your earnings for the rest of your life.

Because of the above protections, we have also seen our wages in the State of Washington explode over the past 20 years. I got hired in 2001. The average salary for a firefighter in our state in 2001 was \$36,000 per year. I don't need to tell you how far we have come since then.

I would bet every one of you enjoys and appreciates these benefits, but not all of you contribute to the machine that makes it happen. This is where those PAC dollars go, and I'd say it's a hell of a return on investment. Don't let one or two bad politicians distract you from the long game. These significant changes and wins have come over decades, or longer, of continually applying pressure and investing in candidates that sometimes pay off and sometimes don't. Looking back over decades, you see success.

If these benefits and improvements mean something to you and your family – contribute to it! Any Union officer should be able to get you the PAC forms to restart contributions or increase the ones you are making now. Don't let someone else carry your water and pay for the benefits you and your family enjoy.

In Solidarity,

Randy Marler



VICE PRESIDENT
LEE MCNAMEE

From The VP's Desk:

Hello Brothers and Sisters,

I would like to use my space this month to follow up on some of the items I mentioned in the last article about the classes I took at the IAFF ALTS training summit. One of the classes I was most interested in had to do with labor management relationships. After talking with several folks from around the country in the class, it seems that while we have our struggles, it sounds like we might be on the right path. There are others who have far more adversarial relationships with their administration, and those who have very collaborative relationships with fewer problems. I think we fall somewhere in the middle. Our relationship has been strained for sure over the last year or more, but I am optimistic that we may be in a better place now and moving towards a relationship built with trust and mutual respect.

The grievance arbitration class was a great exercise in case studies and actual scenarios. It focused on constructing contract language with an eye towards avoiding grievances, and how arbitrators base their decisions. It emphasized the importance of making sure the language and intent of the language is clear and not ambiguous. It also dealt with utilizing various types of past practice arguments if the language is ambiguous or the contract is silent on the matter.

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We have personally experienced issues and or grievances over the years when a new administrator or lawyer that was not involved in the drafting of the language reads it and is not familiar with the intent of the language. It was very interesting to see everyone's different perspectives on how they thought the case studies would be settled and their thoughts on the CBA language and or past practices presented. The information presented was great to have as we prepare to begin negotiations again.

One of the other classes I attended was basically a status report on issues that pertain to us in the 118th congress. As you are aware, there isn't a whole lot of movement in congress currently, it was reported that out of over 6000 bills presented only 26 passed through both sides, the fewest in decades. I took the class in preparation for the upcoming IAFF Legislative Conference that President Marler and I will be attending next week. There are several issues and bills that directly affect firefighters and their families. There are many items we will be speaking with our elected representatives about such as adding occupational cancer as a line of duty death to the Public Safety Officer Benefits Program, developing PFAS free bunker gear, collective bargaining for all firefighters and EMS personnel, just to name a few. One of the most important issues is saving the AFG/Safer grant programs. These programs are set to sunset this year unless congress acts. Congress has reauthorized these grants several times over the years but has yet to take action this session. We have directly seen the benefits of these programs here at home, many of our positions that are currently on our roster, are a result of these grants and subsequent political action by Local 29. Hopefully, no matter which side of the aisle your political views fall, you can recognize the importance of political action and supporting those that support firefighters.

In Solidarity,

Lee McNamee (509)280-7489 vicepresiaffl29@gmail.com



TREASURER
KIRK GRIFFITH

Treasurer's Report:

I hope all of you are doing great. I am on vacation so this month's article will be a lightning round:

*L29 hockey night was awesome. It was great to hang out with so many of you outside or work and meet your families. Thanks for showing up!

*We sold the old union hall! That thing was a financial burden the past couple years that prevented us from committing to larger Local 29 events. Special thanks to Dan Wilson for putting so much time into getting it sold.

*The WSCFF Legislative Conference was a success. There are several bills affecting us that are well on their way through the house and senate that have support from both sides.

*Local 29's birthday is 2/28 and we will be going back to Jack and Dan's to celebrate. The past year has been incredibly successful, so let's get together to toast our victories.

*The Guns-n-Hoses hockey game will be March 16th. It will feature hockey studs and wannabe studs from Local 29 and the surrounding areas against the local police. Special thanks to Brett Johnston for putting this together. This will be a fundraiser for local charities so please come out and cheer/heckle.

Kirk

Wellness

By Wellness Committee Member Justin Wells

Brothers and Sisters,

I was asked by Brother Golladay to write an article about the Health and Wellness Committee for this edition of the worker. I wanted to let everyone know what we the Committee are doing for cancer this year.

The subject of cancer can be broken down to a few different sections: Prevention, tracking, detection, treatment, & recovery.

We all know the steps, as firefighters, that we should take for prevention and to limit our exposures.

For tracking we've had the opportunity to use the PIIERS.org webpage and mobile app for the past 5+ years. Unfortunately, us as members have not been doing our due diligence to track the proper exposures or track our crew members. PIIERS is lacking in some aspects that I believe we can solve. Something currently in the works is a way to streamline the tracking of our exposures. ESO does have a tracking option underneath the unit report of the fireside. It is an option for the report writer to track the exposures of their crew, unfortunately the members have no access to recall that data at this time. And if the fire/haz-mat report is locked, you have no way to view the report without going through investigation. We are exploring ways the members will be able to print or save that data to their own files for later proof of exposure. This may have to be an agreement between the City and the Local as it is a subscription-based service offered by ESO. There are other options for our members to track themselves and each other that we are also looking at. One option is with the new website for Local 29, building and maintaining our own database so we have the reassurance that our exposures are tracked.

Currently, PIIERS is the most common option for tracking exposure on the job. Another option is the NFORS.org app. In my opinion the NFORS app has a better user interface for your phones. If you would like to try that app, it is available for both android and apple devices and a web page under the same name.

Through the benefit trust, detection should be done annually. Remember to schedule your appointment through Spokane Internal Medicine 509-598-7749.

Next is treatment and recovery. Through the help of Washington State Council Firefighters and FF Cancer Support Network (FCSN), Mike Walker and myself are now the cancer support members for Spokane. We have an upcoming meeting with the FCSN leader for WA state to go over all the information we need to support our members if/when they get the big C. If you or your family are dealing with a cancer diagnosis, please reach out to Mike or myself and we have a small "toolbox" and resources to get you through this hardship.

If you have any more questions about how to track your exposures, or want more info on the increased rate of cancer for firefighters, please reach out to myself or any Health and Wellness Committee member. Take care of yourselves, your families and each other. Please continue to track your exposures, as well as those that are with you. We have to be accountable to ourselves for our families and our futures, as well as to each other.

In Solidarity,
Justin Wells

MERP

By Executive Board Member Corey Newman

Medical care after retirement has long been an obstacle to retirement. The state council has created a plan to help pay for retiree medical care. It is a tax-sheltered, lifetime monthly benefit that reimburses eligible medical expenses (premiums, bills, etc.) It uses the power of collective savings to essentially create a 2nd pension for all our members. Currently, every \$25 you put in earns you 41 cents per month for your entire life. A member making the minimum monthly payment (\$75) for a 30-year career would receive a benefit of \$442.80 for the rest of their life. This is a fantastic program that uses the power of our collective action to remove one of the most complicated pieces of the retirement puzzle. I believe that this program should be our number one contract priority and hope you agree. There is lots of fine print, and I'm happy to talk to anyone who is interested in learning more.

Solidarity forever,
Corey Newman

Thank You

From The Gruenig Family

To Everyone at the Credit Union,

The Gruenig family would like to say a very heartfelt thank you for the generosity shown to our family after the Gray Fire took everything from us. It has been challenging in so many ways, but the love shown to our family has helped tremendously.

The money was obviously put to good use, and much appreciated, as it has allowed us to get back on our feet and our son to replace many of his collectibles.

The help on the rebuild by so many wonderful people was unexpected and has placed Shayne much further along in the process. The work continues, and we are grateful.

The impact from the fire will continue to be in our minds daily, but also so will be gratitude. We know how blessed we are to have so many caring people in our lives, and that Shayne is a part of a brotherhood that circles the wagons around struggling members.

Thank you so very much,

Shayne, Stefanie, and Phoenix Gruenig

THE MONTH AHEAD

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Local 29 Birthday Party | 02/28 |
| SAFO SSP Grievance Meeting | 03/01 |
| IAFF Legislative Conference | 03/03 - 03/06 |
| Union Meeting | 03/12 |
| Labor Management | 03/28 |



SECRETARY
BILL GRUMMONS

From The Editor:

Our website redesign continues, and we hope to have it functional by the end of March. Many thanks to Joanna Balin and Nate Cover who have worked hard on the Benefits Trust portion of the site. I am excited to see the final product and have access to our union information and benefits all in one place.

Secondly, I have heard from several members who have had difficulty accessing the current website and/or problems receiving emails. Thankfully, the members who weren't receiving emails have located them in either their spam folder, or in one odd case, a random archive folder on their email server. If you haven't been receiving Local 29 communications, please begin by checking your account on the website to make sure all of your information is accurate, and then double check your email folders. As always, please reach out to me if I can help in any way.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you in this role, and I hope everyone is doing well.

Bill
509-939-5275

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