



WSLC Workforce Development News

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SUMMER 2026

News in Workforce Development from the Voice of Labor



LABOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE A SUCCESS

Co-hosted by the Oregon Labor Federation, AFL-CIO and the WSLC, the Pacific Northwest Labor Leader Workforce Development Conference: [*Bridging Borders, Building Careers*](#) was held on August 13th at the Sheet Metal Workers Local 16 hall in Portland, Oregon. The conference brought together roughly 60 union leaders and union training providers from across Washington and Oregon to share wins, strategies and opportunities in workforce development.

Speakers included: Cherika Carter, WSLC Secretary-Treasurer; Graham Trainor, Oregon Labor Federation, AFL-CIO President; Shana Peschek, IAM Union Director of Training and Apprenticeships; and Sylvia Dietert, Working for America Institute, AFL-CIO Program Manager; among others.

In addition, there were a range of panel discussions themed around worker-centered workforce development. Attendees also participated in a tour of the Sheet Metal Institute apprenticeship training facility.

What's Inside:

PNW Labor Leaders
Workforce Development
Conference

Labor Leader Spotlight

UI for Striking Workers
Support

WA Workforce
Association Conference
- Nov 3-5

Donna Mack Retires

Get Involved

And more!

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Labor Leader Spotlight: Robert “Bobby” Driskell

Robert “Bobby” Driskell shared his perspective as a labor leader in workforce development. Bobby is the Secretary-Treasurer of Teamsters Local 589, representing public and private sector workers in Kitsap, Clallam, and Jefferson Counties. He also co-chairs the WSLC’s Workforce Development Standing Committee.



What was your first job and what did it teach you about work?

My first job was at Burger King. It taught me that taking pride in your work and putting forth a strong effort is truly rewarding. It also showed me that while workers may differ in skill sets, everyone brings something valuable to the workforce.

What drives you in your role as a union leader in workforce development?

What drives me is the opportunity to help shift how society views labor and workforce jobs. I’m motivated by connecting people (especially youth) to meaningful career paths and demonstrating that these roles are essential to our communities and the future of our workforce.

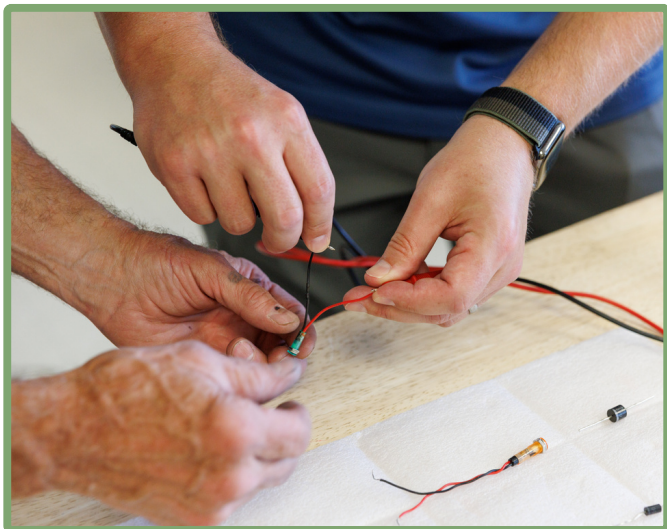
What do you wish people knew about the work that you do?

I want people to understand that our work is centered on real opportunity. Whether someone is looking for a job, exploring the right schooling pathway, or finding training that leads to long-term stability, I see this work as a way to help people move forward in practical and supportive ways. You know, real life stuff.

What are you working on now that you’re most excited about?

Right now, I’m most excited about our efforts to collaborate with local businesses on job shadowing opportunities for students—creating clear pathways that can lead into apprenticeships and other forms of paid, structured workforce development.

UNION MEMBERS CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL COLLEGES



Union members, it's time to put your labor knowledge to work beyond the job site! Community and technical colleges across Washington state are looking for passionate labor leaders like YOU to serve on their program advisory committees.

When labor has a seat at the table, professional and technical training programs get stronger, more relevant, and better equipped to prepare the next generation of skilled workers. That's the power of your voice!

Ready to get involved? These colleges have requested your expertise:

**Renton Technical College
Green River College
Clover Park Technical College
Pierce College
Lake Washington Institute of Technology
Tacoma Community College**

Advisory committees typically meet just 2–3 times a year — a small commitment with a BIG impact on the future of our workforce and communities.

Please contact Shondea Chapman, Workforce Development Director, Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO today and take your place at the table!



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WSLC HELPS STRIKING WORKERS ACCESS UI BENEFITS

from The Stand



*Pichler (center) walks striking hotel workers through the process of applying for UI.
Photo: The STAND*

The WSLC Workforce Development Department recently joined workers striking at the Embassy Suites in Seattle to help UNITE HERE Local 8 members file for Unemployment Insurance (UI). This work is a continuation of the robust WSLC UI Navigator program, originally made possible through federal and state grant funding.

While that funding has now ended, WSLC UI Navigator Michael Pichler will stay on board as full-time staff. The WSLC recognizes the invaluable service he's providing to union members and any worker needing the UI safety net. Pichler has helped more than 3,000 workers access UI in the past two years; he also provides trainings for workers on navigating the system before any possible layoff or strike occurs.

Learn more here: [WSLC helps striking hotel workers access UI benefits — The STAND](#)

WWA WORKFORCE SUMMIT COMING UP IN SPOKANE

The [Washington Workforce Association \(WWA\) Workforce Summit](#) will be held this year in Spokane from November 3rd - 5th at the Davenport Grand Hotel. The WWA conference is the largest annual gathering of workforce development professionals and partners in the state. We hope to see you there!

Event information and registration can be found [here](#).



BUSINESS AND LABOR PARTNER ON WORKFORCE PELL RECOMMENDATIONS

The WSLC, with over 650 affiliated unions, and the Washington Roundtable, made up of executives of major private employers in Washington, spent months developing recommendations that reflect the joint priorities for labor and business as the state implements the expansion of federal Pell Grant funding to short-term training programs. Recommendations were submitted to the Governor's office in May.

Recommendations included, among others: develop a stronger employer-driven process to determine job demand (excluding the existing process for registered apprenticeships), validated by hiring practices; leverage Workforce Pell to support registered apprenticeship and recognized pre-apprenticeship, to the extent it's possible given strict federal rules; and invest in and support the people closest to the work, the financial aid and advising staff working with students and programs.



Chelsea Mason-Placek, WSLC, and Ingrid Stegemoeller, Washington Roundtable, present joint recommendations at the Washington Workforce Board June meeting.

See the [full recommendations](#).

NEW ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL FORMED

Governor Bob Ferguson has established the Governor's Economic Development Council through Executive Order 2602 to help shape Washington's long-term economic strategy. The 26-member council, including WSLC President April Sims, brings together leaders from business, labor, Tribal governments, higher education, technology, aerospace, ports, and economic development organizations. It is the first statewide economic advisory body of its kind since 2006.

Washington currently has the nation's ninth-largest economy and ranks among the top states for economic performance and productivity. The council will advise the Governor and Department of Commerce on a statewide competitiveness plan due in 2027, identify opportunities for family-wage jobs, assess Washington's competitiveness, recommend ways to attract businesses, review regulatory barriers, and propose possible actions for state agencies. View the full article here: [Washington Governor Bob Ferguson](#)

WISHING DONNA MACK A HAPPY RETIREMENT

After a distinguished career with the Washington State Employment Security Department (ESD), Donna Mack leaves behind a legacy built on partnership, service, and kindness.



***Last day selfie:** Donna Mack, Statewide Rapid Response Manager, Employment Security Department. Member of WFSE Local 443 / AFSCME Council 28.*

A proud member of WFSE Local 443 / AFSCME Council 28, Donna spent her career advocating for workers, businesses, workforce professionals, and communities throughout Washington State.

Among her proudest accomplishments was helping create a community of practice among local Rapid Response coordinators across the state. Through years of relationship-building, workforce professionals learned to work seamlessly across regional boundaries. That foundation was evident during the PCA closure and Federal layoffs, when local workforce development boards, state partners, labor organizations, and community stakeholders came together to support affected workers.

“The response was so smooth because the relationships were already there,” Donna reflected. “People didn’t ask whether they should help. The answer was simply, ‘Of course we will work together.’ We shared the workload because we all care and want to serve the workers and businesses.”

Throughout her career, Donna never lost sight of the people behind the numbers. She understood that a job is more than a paycheck. For many workers, it provides dignity, connection, and a sense of purpose. When that is disrupted, the impact reaches far beyond finances.

“No one is laid off because they want to be unemployed,” she said. “When work is disrupted, it can be incredibly difficult. Whatever we can do to support an individual and help them be successful matters. People have value, and they deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.”

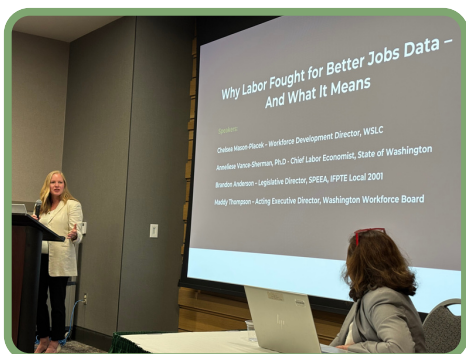
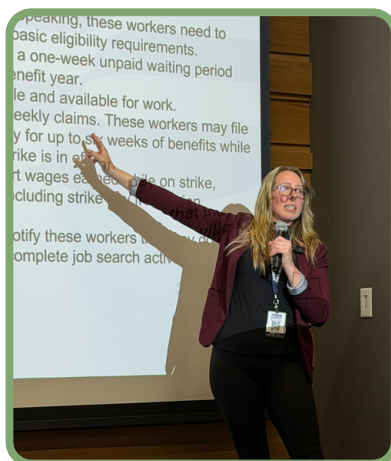
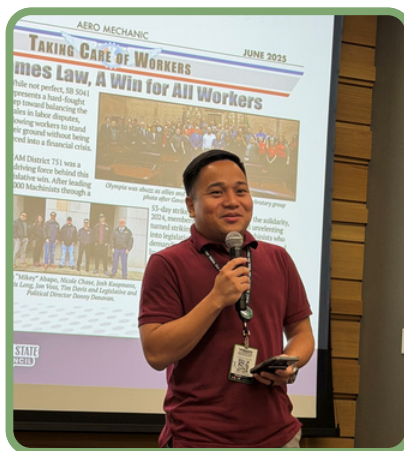
Donna also championed Washington's unique partnership between labor and workforce development, recognizing that strong collaboration produces the best outcome for workers and business alike.

When asked what she hopes people remember, her answer is simple: kindness. Relationships should never be taken for granted. They can be broken by careless actions or words, and they must be nurtured with care and respect.”

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

Workshops at the WSLC Annual Convention

The WSLC Constitutional Convention was held in Wenatchee, July 21st-23rd. Over 450 guests and delegates attended. The WSLC Workforce Development Department hosted a series of workshops covering: labor advocacy for workforce data, WSLC direct worker services, support for registered apprenticeships (not pictured), labor serving on community & technical college advisory boards, and Unemployment Insurance for striking workers.



Guest presenters included:

Jan "Mikey" Abapo (IAM 751 Member)

Brandon Anderson (SPEEA)

Ryan Bradt (Puget Sound Electrical JATC)

Lyle Irimata (WA Student Achievement Council)

Nicole Miller (Construct a Career)

Stephanie Sams (ESD)

Maddy Thompson (WA Workforce Board)

Anneliese Vance-Sherman (ESD)

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THE FOUNDATION FOR WORKING FAMILIES is a non-profit organization established by the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO and its affiliates to assist union families when they need it most. Donate to support the mission below.

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