

TEA COUNCIL OF REPRESENTATIVES
Meeting Summary by
Alton Gaskill, Chair
October 18, 2011, 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m., KSC 8i

Procedural:

This is the second month I am posting the monthly Council of Representatives meeting summary on the TEA Web Site. I need every Representative's help by advising their work units that the Council of Representatives meeting summaries are easily accessible at www.TEAsattle.org. Once members are accustomed to clicking on the web site, it will be much easier to generate better communication and information sharing.

TEA support of Occupy Seattle

TEA members have approached the TEA Board expressing an interest in supporting the Occupy Seattle protesters either financially or through an official TEA statement of support. Generally, this idea was not fully endorsed by the Representatives with the following observations:

- No clear organizational leadership in Occupy Seattle
- Wide varieties of views within TEA may not align with Occupy Seattle
- Occupy Seattle is quasi-political with different agenda
- Some protesters were engaged in illegal acts

One suggestion is that we have a discussion around "where to move your money" and what bank or credit union is socially responsive to this community or region. Some suggestions are that folks look into banking at Banner Bank, Columbia Bank, any local credit union. I will be looking into this question. We thought that TEA banks at Key Bank but I subsequently verified from the TEA Treasurer that TEA banks at US Bank.

Health Care Administrator – Regence Blue Shield

King County announced that it has awarded the Benefits Administration Contract to Regency Blue Shield. Several members have expressed their dismay in this news in light of the recent issues the State Insurance Commissioner has in the performance of Regence Blue Shield. Last month I posted on the TEA Website a link to a news article about Regency Blue Shield.

One representative reported that Walgreens is no longer a member of Express Scripts.

This reduction in network is a concern to this Rep given that Walgreens has a national presence and is conveniently located.

Another member stated that Rengence has much fewer options in alternative care providers. New alternative care providers such as massage therapists and acupuncturists have been denied access to the Rengence network of providers for years. Providers in the network can be booked up, too busy, not conveniently located and generally seem overburdened.

Another concern is the effort of Delta Dental-Washington Dental Associates to lower the cost of dental care by not allowing usual and customary increases since 2008 according to one Rep and now forcing its network providers to accept even greater cuts for in-network services. Some members have lost their in-network status with their dentist as dentists struggle with rising costs. WDA's justification is that Washington State is above the national average and one of the two highest in the nation for dental services costs.

The County claims that the benefits administrators it contracts with are "substantially similar" to previous administrators, therefore, it is not a subject of bargaining, but rather a management prerogative according to our attorney. At what point does TEA offer a rebuttal to this position? The county is spotlighting its customer service approach yet providing its employees with benefits administrators in need customer service improvements. The county is also spotlighted healthy Incentives in its reduction in health care costs, rather than increases in co-pays, more employees not getting Gold status, and changes to network providers that benefits administrators have made.

Open Enrollment

In light of the change in Benefits Administrator for KingCare, Open Enrollment begins October 31st and closing November 18th. Members may feel that they are being forced into the Group Health system. We discussed whether Group Health is readily available for those living in remote locations in the region. Some did not think so and other felt that Group Health has a good presence in the rural communities.

Coalition Bargaining for Health Benefits

The Joint Labor/Management Insurance Committee (JLMIC) kicked off bargaining for health benefits on Wednesday, October 12th. TEA is not a member of the JLMIC but is impacted by their agreements with county.

Transit Bargaining

The County and TEA Transit are in a two week process of choosing an arbitrator.

Teamsters Local 117

On October 5, Teamsters Local 117 petitioned PERC asking PERC to determine whether a group of WW TEA employees, i.e., “all administrative Specialists, Administrative Staff Assistants, and Administrators in the Waste Water Treatment Division currently represented by TEA in a mixed bargaining unit” want to designate the petitioner as their exclusive bargaining representative.

Performance Assessments in WW

A recent directive from WW management is that criteria scores should be rounded to the nearest ½ point in 2010 PAs. Supervisors that used this approach were faced with a choice of substantially changing scores upward or downward. Some WW employees that were consistently achieving “over-the-top” merit in the past lost their merit pay in 2011. It was pointed out that it takes a minimum of two years of good evaluations to get over-the-top merit back. TEA filed an Unfair Labor Practice complaint. Members of the TEA Board and TEA Legal Council are now focused on reviewing the facts of the case.

It was noted that TEA should work harder toward moving to longevity pay rather than tying merit pay to PAs. More to follow.

