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Real News ⚡
Real Impact

Thousands of Starbucks baristas strike over stalled labor talks



Workers United baristas strike in front of a Starbucks store. Photo: Workers United

By KIENAN BRISCOE

SEATTLE—More than 1,000 unionized Starbucks workers, representing 65 stores in over 40 different cities, are striking across the country as of Thursday, November 13, to protest what they're calling "stalled contract negotiations" with the Seattle-based coffee giant.

The union's demands are for a fair union contract with improved staffing, hours, take-home pay, and on-the-job protections, it says.

According to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), Administrative Law Judges have found Starbucks to have committed over 400 labor law violations, including firing pro-union employees, threatening store closures, spying, intimidating, and creating policies that hinder union activity.

Starbucks, on the other hand, has disagreed with the judge's decisions.

"If Starbucks keeps stone-

walling a fair contract and refusing to end union-busting, they'll see their business grind to a halt," said Michelle Eisen, Starbucks Workers United spokesperson and 15 year veteran barista. "No contract, no coffee is more than a tagline—it's a pledge to interrupt Starbucks operations and profits until a fair union contract and an end to unfair labor practices are won."

Workers United, the union representing Starbucks workers, has filed more than 1,000 Unfair Labor Practic-

es (ULPs) against Starbucks — 125 of those since the beginning of the year alone. Of these, 700 are currently unresolved and include alleged bad faith bargaining, unilateral policy changes, and specific ULP's around retaliatory firings and discipline, the union says.

"Starbucks knows where we stand. We've been clear and consistent on what baristas need to succeed: more take-home pay, better hours, re-

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Washington Saves, a new state-facilitated retirement program for all workers starting 2027

By MARIO LOTMORE

OLYMPIA—Washington Saves, starting in 2027, is a state-facilitated automatic Individual Retirement Account (IRA) program designed to bridge the retirement savings gap for workers in Washington who lack access to employer-sponsored plans.

The program was created from Senate Bill 6069, passed by the Washington State Legislature in March 2024 and signed into law by Governor Jay Inslee on March 28, 2025, under RCW 19.05. The bill's primary sponsor was Senator Mark Mullet (D-Issaquah) with several co-sponsors including local state senator Marko Liias (D-Edmonds).

A Pew Charitable Trusts (Pew) study released December 2023 found that forty-three percent (43%) of private sector workers in Washington—some 1.2 million workers—lacked access to a workplace retirement plan, particularly in small businesses or gig economies. The study was part of a 2023-25 biennial operating budget request that directed the Department of Commerce to assess retirement preparedness of Washington residents.

By creating Washington Saves, the state joined 19 other states with similar enacted state-facilitated auto-IRA initiatives. The thirteen states with active operational programs as of November 2025 are: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Virginia.

Washington Saves functions through automatic enrollment for eligible employees aged 18 and older at covered employers, with contributions deducted from paychecks and invested in a professionally managed IRA—either traditional (pre-tax) or Roth (post-tax), based on program options. The default contribution rate, set by the governing board between 3% and 7% initially, can escalate by up to 1% annually to a 10% maximum, according to the Final Bill Report.

Continued **PAGE 6**

Saudi Arabia designated Major Non-NATO Ally

By MARIO LOTMORE

WASHINGTON, D.C.—President Donald J Trump announced on Tuesday that Saudi Arabia has been granted status as a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA), a designation that expedites U.S. arms sales, technology transfers, and joint military exercises without the mutual-defense obligations of full NATO membership. Other MNNA countries are Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Brazil, Colombia, Egypt, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Morocco, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, South Korea, Thailand, and



President Donald J Trump and Vice President JD Vance, welcome the Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman at the White House on November 18, 2025. Source: White House.

Continued **PAGE 7**

WA state budget gets \$105M boost, Gov Ferguson warns of “Deep Financial Challenges” still ahead

By JAKE GOLDSTEIN-STREET

[WASHINGTON STATE STANDARD]—Washington state budget writers got a mild dose of good news on Tuesday, but are still looking at a strained balance sheet.

Revenue projections show collections up \$105 million for the current two-year state budget compared to the last forecast in September. That amounts to a 0.1% increase, a change from previous reports showing precipitous drops.

House Democrats’ chief budget writer, Timm Ormsby, called the forecast a “little welcome relief.”

“We’ve leveled out a bit and stabilized, which was pleasing, but it certainly doesn’t take away from the challenges and difficult decisions we’re going to have to make in the upcoming session,” said Ormsby, of Spokane. “At least we’re not going backwards.”

In the late September forecast, anticipated collections had slid over half a billion dollars since Gov. Bob Ferguson signed off on the new two-year budget in May. Tuesday’s projections inch the state back toward even.

Tuesday’s forecast is the last one before lawmakers return to Olympia on Jan. 12 for a 60-day legislative session where they’ll adjust the budget.

Attention next turns to Gov. Bob Ferguson.

The first-term Democrat will release a budget plan before Christmas, with his proposed tweaks to the two-year, \$77.8-billion framework lawmakers passed this year. This current budget runs through June 30, 2027.

“This forecast was not as bad as we feared,” Ferguson said in a statement. Still, he said, “This forecast does not change the scale of the problem that my team and I have been working on.”

Ferguson said the next round of budgeting will involve “many difficult decisions” as the state works through deep financial challenges. He said he’d propose a plan that “preserves core services but still makes investments in important areas.”

Sen. Chris Gildon, R-Puyallup, in a statement, said the forecast won’t force the governor to “change course.”

“We will see in a matter of weeks whether he is on the side of taking even more money for government or standing with the families of our state, who have

to live within their means,” said Gildon.

Talk of further hikes

Long-term, the state’s budget outlook is still not good.

Estimates show the \$105 million rise in expected revenues will be dashed by the end of the next fiscal cycle.

Total revenue through mid-2029 will be down \$66 million since projections in September, the state’s chief economist, Dave Reich, told the Economic and Revenue Forecast Council on Tuesday. This includes a slight uptick in revenue in the now-finished 2023-25 budget.

This year, Democratic lawmakers passed billions in new and increased taxes, along with spending cuts, to balance the budget amid a shortfall in the \$12 billion to \$16 billion range.

The dispiriting projections are driving discussion about additional revenue ideas for 2026, including the untested “wealth tax” and, possibly, an income tax on richer Washingtonians.

But late last month, Ferguson said he was “skeptical of additional revenue.” This year, he rejected a number of tax proposals before signing the eventual package lawmakers approved, which was slimmed from their earlier proposals.

Sen. June Robinson, the Senate Democrats’ budget lead, has already told her Senate colleagues to not even bother asking for earmarks next year from the state’s operating budget because of Washington’s budget crunch.

Robinson and Ormsby are set to meet with Ferguson next Monday to discuss budget plans.

Verging on a recession?

Tuesday’s forecast pegs revenue fueling this budget at over \$74.4 billion. While Washington operates on a two-year budget cycle, the budget has to be balanced across four years.

Lagging housing permits and employment growth were drags on Tuesday’s forecast, while it benefits from tobacco settlement payouts and projected increases in estate tax revenue. State-wide employment isn’t likely to grow in 2026, Reich said.

“One explanation could be, we’re actually heading into a recession. They’re hard to see those coming,” Reich said. “But another explanation, and one that many economists have been talking

about, is just that we’re in this kind of period of not only slow demand, but slow supply.”

Moody’s Analytics recently listed Washington among nearly half of U.S. states that are in or near a recession. State Rep. Travis Couture, R-Allyn, said the state’s policies would be to blame for this, not the federal government.

“If that’s true, we’ve put ourselves into a recession,” said Couture, the budget lead for House Republicans.

The latest forecast only covers the state’s operating budget, which funds everything from public schools and health care to social services and prisons.

There are separate revenue projections for transportation. Estimates for the transportation budget last week showed an expected \$66 million drop in receipts over the next four years, compared to predictions from September. That fac-

tors in better-than-anticipated returns in the 2023-25 cycle.

The next operating budget forecast is expected in February.

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LYNNWOOD TIMES

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LYNNWOOD TIMES
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Lynnwood proposed property tax hike sparks heated council debate

By KIENAN BRISCOE meeting.

LYNNWOOD—The Lynnwood City Council continued its conversation on its Budget, which included 2025 mid-biennial budget amendments and a proposed 2026 property tax levy, in addition to municipal code changes, at its Business Meeting held Monday, November 17.

Mid-Biennium Budget Review Amendments

The first agenda item was to review mid-biennial budget amendments. As required by state law, all municipalities that have a biennial budget (such as Lynnwood) must conduct a “mid-biennial budget review” during the odd year when a budget has not been approved.

The complete list of amendments spans several lines, but in summary most of the proposed amendments have to do with fund transfers, clerical corrections, and performing true-ups on old projects to close them out (at least as far as the amendments council has not yet acted on).

This was the last opportunity the Lynnwood City Council had to adjust these amendments before finally taking action at its upcoming meeting next week.

As this was now the fifth time this agenda item has been discussed by council, no council members had any questions or comments.

Property Tax Levy increase

Second on the agenda, Council continued its conversation regarding a proposed Property Tax Levy increase ahead of taking action at its upcoming November 24

A state law requires cities, who impose a property tax levy, to certify their levy for the following year by the end of November. In this case, council must take action at its November 24 meeting, at the latest, to meet this deadline.

The current ordinance on the table reflects the maximum amount the City of Lynnwood could levy. Council had the opportunity on Monday to finalize any adjustments before adopting the ordinance at its next meeting.

The City of Lynnwood currently levies approximately \$7.2 million in property taxes, but the maximum allowable levy is a little over \$11 million, per state law (without a vote by the public), which is taking the full amount of \$8.5 million in banked capacity into consideration.

Lynnwood’s current property tax levy is set at \$0.67/per \$1,000 of assessed property value on average which amounts to about \$7.2 million for the city, \$424 annually or \$35 a month for the average homeowner.

If Lynnwood were to approve the property tax levy hike, as drafted in the current ordinance, that rate would increase to \$633 annually for the average homeowner, or \$53 a month on average (assuming a 5% home value increase). This is roughly a .17 cent increase per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

It’s an amount Council President Nick Coelho called “not nothing.”

“It is dramatic, but it’s also not 52% of people’s overall tax bill,” said Coelho. “It’s a Netflix

subscription but is also goes towards really important services.”

By “services”, Coelho explicitly referenced the Lynnwood Police Department and the city’s looming \$10.7 million deficit (some council members say it could be up to \$20 million).

Coelho also noted that many Lynnwood residents, such as seniors and people with disabilities, qualify for property tax exemptions (in addition to reduced rates for utilities).

Council member Patrick Decker, on the other hand, stated (hypothetically) that if half of Lynnwood residents qualified for property tax exemption the city would still receive that, more than, \$11 million in property taxes which, he continued, means the other half of Lynnwood residents could see a disproportionately much higher property tax than what was presented to council Monday.

Council member, and Mayor-elect, George Hurst had a different take, adding that “property tax is not the only thing that’s hitting people.”

“Home insurance has doubled,” said Hurst. “There are additional costs for home ownerships and if we keep tacking costs on and say, ‘oh it’s only \$17 bucks it doesn’t matter’, it does matter. It matters a lot. I think we need to keep that into consideration when we talk about property tax.”

Council President Coelho, a renter who has experienced significant increases to his rent in recent years, stated that having a long debate on

Continued PAGE 8

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Somebody's watching you: Flock versus red light cameras in the City of Lynnwood

By MARIO LOTMORE

LYNNWOOD—In reaction to several members of the community voicing their concerns that the City of Lynnwood's Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) technology may have been accessed for immigration-related queries at its October 24 meeting, the Lynnwood Police Department (LPD) announced last week that it temporarily paused the law enforcement tool known as Flock Safety cameras citing public trust.

"Flock cameras have already proven to be an invaluable investigative tool in solving crimes and keeping our community safe," said Police Chief Cole Langdon. "However, it's equally important that we maintain the public's trust. Out of respect for the concerns raised and our commitment to transparency, we have chosen to pause the system while we strengthen safeguards to ensure the technology is used responsibly and lawfully."

The report titled, "Leaving the Door Wide Open: Flock Surveillance Systems and Immigration Enforcement in Washington State," suggested that Lynnwood's ALPR data may have been accessed for immigration-related queries. LPD confirmed that no federal law enforcement agencies accessed Lynnwood's ALPR data during June 29, 2025 (date the system became operational) and July 8, 2025, (date the root cause and Corrective Action Plan was determined).

Besides Flock cameras, the City of Lynnwood, since 2006, has also utilized red light cameras which have become a familiar fixture at key intersections throughout the city, designed to deter drivers from running red lights and exceeding speed limits in designated areas. These cameras generate approximately \$5.6 million annually for the city.

Flock differs from red light camera in that Flock cameras are crime prevention and investigation tools, whereas red light cameras are used to exclusively detect traffic violations (e.g., speeding, running red lights). Flock cameras capture every passing vehicle, including license plate, vehicle image, and GPS location, whereas red light cameras only record when a violation occurs. Flock cameras can track vehicles in real-time, whereas red light cameras do not track vehicles continuously.

According to research performed by the Lynnwood Times, the City of Lynnwood contracts with Verra Mobility—an Arizona-based company—for its photo enforcement program with offices throughout the country in states such as Florida and Indiana. Verra Mobility, operating as a vendor to the City of Lynnwood, can provide photo enforcement data to federal authorities, but only under specific legal conditions typically requiring formal legal requests, such as subpoenas or warrants.

The difference between Flock and our red light cameras is that Flock is tracking people who have not committed crimes," Quinn Van Order, a spokesman for Deflock Lynnwood, provided in a statement to the Lynnwood Times. "As no warrant is required to access Flock, this constitutes an end run against our 4th amendment rights. Law enforcement has a wide array of tools at their disposal to track criminals, including the ability to dump cell tower location data, but these tools require a court order. This Flock network completely bypasses the oversight mechanism of requiring a court order for surveillance.

According to contracts with other cities, that local city owns the photo enforcement data collected by Verra Mobility systems who acts as the data processor, not the data owner—managing hardware, software, and citation workflows. Federal agencies (e.g., FBI, DHS, ICE)

may request access to photo enforcement data from Verra Mobility for investigations and through local jurisdictions but there is no automatic sharing of red light camera data with federal authorities.

Washington State passed the Keep Washington Workers Act (KWWA) during the 2019 Legislative Session which recodified state law ensuring "the state of Washington remains a place where the rights and dignity of all residents are maintained and protected in order to keep Washington working."

The KWWA (RCW 43.17.425) does the following:

- Prohibits state and local law enforcement providing aid in federal civil immigration enforcement.
- Bans holding individuals in custody solely based on immigration status.
- Restricts sharing nonpublic personal information with federal immigration authorities.
- Limits interviewing or detaining people based only on immigration status, except in specific public safety scenarios.

Preliminary research by the Lynnwood Times is discovering that unlike Flock Safety's ALPR network, which allows real-time cross-jurisdictional access, Verra Mobility's systems are not designed for broad surveillance. While Flock data can be accessed by thou-

sands of agencies nationally, including federal ones, often without a warrant, Verra Mobility's photo enforcement data is event-specific triggered when a traffic violation occurs.

If a federal investigation involves a specific vehicle or incident captured by a Verra Mobility camera, the agency may (not must) obtain footage through legal channels.

The Lynnwood Times is awaiting confirmation from LPD and the City since Friday on how data privacy and system access for the Flock cameras are any different than that of red-light cameras, and confirmation if the City has confirmed with its vendor, Verra Mobility, that photo enforcement is not being shared with federal authorities.

In the month of September, according to the LPD, the Flock Safety system flagged 594 vehicles that were actively being investigated for a crime. In just one month the system notified the city of a violent person associated with a vehicle 76 times, and 138 vehicles were associated with domestic violence protection orders and three missing persons.

The system has also assisted the City of Lynnwood locate a missing elderly male, helped catch a suspect involved in an identity theft case at the Lynnwood Rec Center, and has helped catch active felons and those involved in an armed robbery at Alderwood Mall.

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T&T Supermarket now open at Lynnwood Crossroads



T&T Supermarkets Lynnwood holds grand opening ceremony with Lynnwood Mayor Christine Frizzell, T&T Supermarkets CEO Tina Lee, Lynnwood Police Chief Cole Langon, and Consulate General of Canada in Seattle Pierre Chalifour. Photo: T&T

By KIENAN BRISCOE

LYNNWOOD—Hundreds of residents lined up at the Lynnwood Crossroads as early as 5 a.m. this morning, eager to be the first to shop at Lynnwood's brand-new Asian supermarket, T&T, now open to the public as of Thursday, November 13.

T&T Supermarkets are the largest Asian Supermarket in Canada, operating over 38 stores across Canada and the United States. The stores are located in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, and Washington. T&T Supermarkets was founded in Vancouver in 1993 and is now led by second generation successor and CEO, Tina Lee. T&T Supermarkets is headquartered in Richmond, BC, with offices in Toronto and Los Angeles.

T&T's 30,000 square foot Lynnwood location is the second Washington

store to open following its Bellevue location opening in December of 2024.

Beginning at 8 a.m. Thursday, the Asian Supermarket chain held an invite-only grand opening ceremony featuring a lion dance ceremony and remarks by Lynnwood Mayor Christine Frizzell, T&T Supermarkets CEO Tina Lee, Lynnwood Police Chief Cole Langon, and Consulate General of Canada in Seattle Pierre Chalifour.

"When we have a business come into our town, they make it a gathering place where people want to come, they want to spend their money and make commerce, the byproduct of that is safety," said Chief Langdon. "We're really excited about this, we're excited to have a store this caliber in town and it's just one more thing that makes Lynnwood awesome."

Doors officially opened to the public

at 9 a.m. and the first 300 customers received a free \$10 T&T gift card. Shoppers also received a free \$10 coupon with a \$68, or more, purchase (before tax), along with exclusive city magnets and more.

"Access to food is a top priority for our City and our community alike. To have such a prestigious grocer like T&T in our City is very special. Thank you, Tina Lee, your family, and your amazing team for seeing the potential in our city and for Choosing Lynnwood," said Mayor Frizzell. "I know that our community members and many people up and down the I-5 corridor are very excited to have the second-ever U.S. T&T sited here in Lynnwood. Personally, I am looking forward to exploring every aisle."

The Lynnwood T&T location has a variety of Lynnwood-only exclusives including the Baby Bear Bao with braised pork belly, the Sesame Mochi Rice Ball, and specialty beverages from the in-house kitchen.

The bakery was another highlight, offering over 150 beloved baked goods — from T&T's signature Portuguese Egg Tarts and new Pistachio Portuguese Tarts to Fresh Mango Cakes, Lava Chocolate Mochi Puffs, and Hong Kong-style buns. Several fresh desserts also made their U.S. debut at Lynnwood, including the Matcha Pineapple Snow Volcano Cake, Fig and Cheese Bun, and Mango Coconut Sticky Rice.

This is, of course, all in addition to the wide variety of Asian groceries including fresh produce, live seafood, prepared foods from an in-house

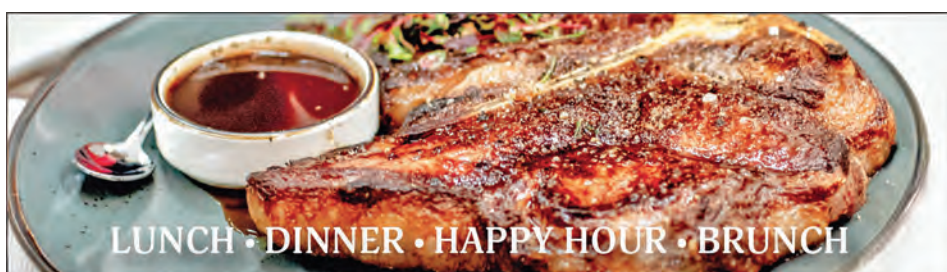
kitchen (like BBQ, congee, and sushi), a bakery with Asian-style breads and pastries, and a large selection of packaged snacks and drinks. The store also carries a diverse range of Asian cooking essentials and even has a dedicated section for hot pot ingredients.

"I think it's awesome to have another vendor who supports us and represents us," said Lynnwood resident William Phong, one of the first 300 customers to line up. "Having more representation of Asian vendors, to bring people together through food and culture in Lynnwood is great."

This will be the first year T&T is launching its Thanksgiving menu featuring its popular Chinese-style roasted turkey stuffed with seasoned sticky rice, available at both the upcoming Lynnwood store as well as the Bellevue location.

T&T is also offering a full lineup of hot pot essentials, ranging from soup bases and T&T private-label meat rolls to fish balls and cookware, making it easy for customers to enjoy a warm, comforting meal at home.

T&T Supermarkets in Lynnwood is located at 19630 Highway 99. Its hours are 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. For those who can't make the trip, T&T offers same-day delivery of seafood, bakery, and grocery favorites—with free express shipping on orders over \$59 using code FREE59. New members get \$10 off their first two orders of \$35 or more. Visit tntsupermarket.us or download the T&T App for details.



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Lenny Wilkens, Basketball icon and Hall of Famer, dies at 88

By MARIO LOTMORE

SEATTLE—Lenny Wilkens, a towering figure in basketball whose career spanned five decades as one of the game's premier point guards, innovative coaches and a champion of youth development, died on November 9, 2025, surrounded by family. He was 88.

Born Leonard Randolph Wilkens on October 28, 1937, in Brooklyn, New York, Wilkens grew up in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood, the son of a Black American father and an Irish American mother.

Raised in the Catholic faith after his father's early death, he honed his skills at Boys High School alongside future MLB star Tommy Davis, emerging as a graceful left-handed guard known for his court vision and consistency.

Wilkens attended Providence College from 1957 to 1960, where he became a two-time All-America selection, leading the Friars to their first National Invitation Tournament (NIT) appearance in 1959 and the finals in 1960.

Upon graduation, he ranked second in school history with 1,193 points—a mark that has since slipped to 26th—and Providence retired his No. 14 jersey in 1996, honoring him as the program's first alumnus to receive the distinction. In 2006, he was inducted into the Col-



NBA Hall-of-Famer Lenny Wilkens, July 6, 2023, thanking Snohomish County for its investment in child care. Lynnwood Times | Mario Lotmore

berlain. Traded to the expansion Seattle SuperSonics in 1968, he averaged 22.4 points, 6.2 rebounds and 8.2 assists in his debut campaign, leading the league in assists during the 1969–70 season. Brief stints followed with the Cleveland Cavaliers (1972–1974) and Portland Trail Blazers (1974–1975), where he concluded his on-court career.

Wilkens' transition to coaching marked him as a trailblazer, becoming one of the few to excel as both player and bench leader. He began as a play-

surpassed Red Auerbach as the winningest coach on January 6, 1995, with his 939th victory, though the team never advanced beyond the second round.

Later stops included the Toronto Raptors (2000–2003), where he secured the franchise's first playoff series win in 2001, and the New York Knicks (2004–2005).

Wilkens' accolades reflect his dual legacy: inducted into the Naismith Memo-

rial Basketball Hall of Fame as a player in 1989 and as a coach in 1998, he is the only person enshrined in both categories. He served as an assistant on the 1992 "Dream Team" and head coach for the gold-medal-winning 1996 U.S. Olympic squad, earned NBA Coach of the Year honors in 1994 and was named to the NBA's 75th Anniversary Team as both player and coach in 2021. In 2022, he ranked among the league's 15 Greatest Coaches.

Beyond the court, Wilkens left an indelible mark on community initiatives.

He founded the Lenny Wilkens Foundation for Children, which has raised millions for pediatric care, including support for Seattle's Odessa Brown Children's Clinic. A longtime advocate for youth empowerment, Wilkens was a dedicated supporter of Rise Up Academy in Everett—formerly Greater Trinity Academy—participating in fundraising events like celebrity golf tournaments to bolster its programs for underserved students.

Wilkens, who lived in Medina, was married to Marilyn Reed from 1962 until his death; the couple had three children—Leesha, Randy and Jamee—and seven grandchildren. In 2021, Seattle renamed Thomas Street to Lenny Wilkens Way in his honor, and a statue was unveiled outside Climate Pledge Arena earlier this year.

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Participants receive a default investment allocation but can select alternatives, including a self-directed option, or reallocate funds anytime.

"It's an auto IRA program," explained Cal from the Washington Saves team at the Department of Financial Institutions (DFI). "Any employee will be automatically enrolled. They'll have an enrollment period to opt out. If you don't opt out during that period, you can opt out at any time. Your money is your money."

For enrollees, the plans are portable ensuring accounts travel with workers across jobs—self-employment or un-employment—all in one secure consolidated program.

"I know a lot of people who work for multiple employers," Cal said. "Instead of having multiple 401Ks, if you have Washington Saves, if you're contributing at two employers, it goes into the same account."

This flexibility empowers individuals to build wealth toward retirement; however federal law prohibits employer matching for IRAs.

Employers play a facilitative role without fiduciary liability or administrative overhead costs, a key relief for small business owners.

Covered employers—those in business in Washington for at least two years, with a physical presence, at least 10,400 combined employee hours the prior year (roughly five full-time equivalents), and no qualified retirement plan for employ-

ees with one year of continuous service—must register, provide employee rosters, distribute disclosures, and remit deductions timely.

"The requirement is meant to be easy to administer, and no cost to the employer, and no financial liability as well," said Heidi Iyall, Outreach and Marketing lead for Washington Saves at DFI.

Non-covered employers or self-employed individuals may join voluntarily. Iyall clarified with the Lynnwood Times that the program is still under development and "there are still some decisions to be made by the Governing Board that will determine how the final program will look."

A 15-member Washington Saves Governing Board will oversee design, implementation, and operation of the program, with expertise from lawmakers, financial professionals, and advocates.

Membership includes the State Treasurer, the Director of Labor & Industries (L&I) or designee, one representative each from the two largest Senate and House caucuses, and nine Governor-appointed members representing securities, insurance, certified financial planners, small businesses, minority- and women-owned businesses, asset-building coalitions, retirement advocates, covered employees, and employers. Terms are three years, with DFI providing administrative support.

The board will also contract for investment management, set policies, collect modest fees, and annually report to the Washington State Legislature on participation and performance of the program.

The inaugural board meeting convened on June 30, 2025, where State Representative Kristine Reeves (D-Federal Way) led proceedings and was elected co-chair alongside Representative Hunter Abell (R-Inchelium). A preliminary report on timelines, outreach, and progress is due December 1, 2025, followed by a final design and feedback report on December 1, 2026. Education for employers ramps up in early 2027 through L&I, with full operations launching July 1, 2027—potentially phased in for an employer depending on employer size for a smoother transition.

Enforcement rests with L&I, which handles complaints from employees or representatives filed within three years of violations. For administrative lapses like failure to enroll or inform, L&I investigates, offers technical assistance or educational letters, and issues citations only for willful violations after January 1, 2030. Current penalties for employers who fail to comply are \$100 maximum for the violation, \$250 for the second, and \$500 per subsequent offense.

Unremitted contributions trigger Wage

Payment Act probes. Employers have 30 days to appeal citations, ensuring due process. If a worker believes their employer is failing to automatically enroll workers in Washington Saves, that worker can file a complaint with L&I.

Washington Saves promises retirement access, with employees holding rights to opt in/out, adjust rates, and control investments, while employers fulfill minimal administrative duties with no state fees or costs.

"It's a way for employers to support their employees in building their wealth into retirement," Iyall shared with the Lynnwood Times. "It shows that they value their employees and want to see them be financially secure."

To learn more about Washington Saves, visit wasaves.com. Also, Washington Saves will soon be announcing Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for fund managers, so sign up for the latest updates and notifications.

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Former Lynnwood businessman and NFL Hall of Famer Kenny Easley dies at 66

By MARIO LOTMORE

SEATTLE—Kenny Easley, the Pro Football Hall of Fame recipient renowned for his hard-hitting style during his tenure with the Seattle Seahawks, passed away on November 14, 2025, at the age of 66. His death followed a long period of declining health, though an immediate cause was not disclosed. He had previously undergone triple-bypass heart surgery in 2016 and retired from the NFL due to kidney disease.

The Seattle Seahawks on Saturday, posted to X recognized the loss of a former player who embodied toughness and leadership on the field.

Born Kenneth Mason Easley Jr. on January 15, 1959, in Chesapeake, Virginia, Easley attended Oscar F. Smith High School, where he excelled as a dual-threat quarterback, becoming the first player in Virginia high school history to rush and pass for over 1,000 yards in a single season. At UCLA from 1977 to 1980, he earned consensus All-American honors three times, set school records with 19 interceptions and 324 tackles, and had his No. 5 jersey retired. Easley also played basketball at UCLA and was drafted by the Chicago Bulls in the 1981 NBA Draft but chose football instead.

Selected fourth overall by the Seattle Seahawks in the 1981 NFL Draft, Easley spent his entire seven-year professional career with the team from 1981 to 1987. Nicknamed “The Enforcer” for his intimidating physicality, Easley quickly established himself as one of the premier defensive backs of the 1980s. Easley Jr earned AFC Defensive Rookie of the Year honors in 1981, made five Pro Bowl appearances, and received first-team All-Pro recognition three times. In 1984, Easley was named NFL Defensive Player of the Year—the first safety to win the award since 1973—after leading the league with 10 interceptions, two of which he returned for touchdowns.

Easley Jr was inducted into the Sea-



Former Seattle Seahawks defensive back Kenny Easley delivers his speech as he is inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame on August 5, 2017. Snapshot from Football Hall of Fame speech.

hawks Ring of Honor in 2002, the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2017 as a senior candidate—with his No. 45 jersey retired by the Seahawks that year—the College Football Hall of Fame in 1991, the UCLA Athletics Hall of Fame in 1991, and the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame in 1998.

Over his career, he amassed 32 interceptions for 538 yards and three touchdowns, 11 fumble recoveries, eight sacks, and 498 tackles.

Easley’s career was cut short after the 1987 season due to a diagnosis of idiopathic nephrotic syndrome, a severe kidney condition, leading to his retirement following a failed trade to the Phoenix Cardinals in 1988. He underwent a kidney transplant in 1990 and later sued the Seahawks, alleging that the overuse of pain medication contributed to his illness which was settled out of court.

Post-retirement, Easley Jr ventured into business, owning the Alderwood Oldsmobile & Cadillac dealership in Lynnwood, WA, under a General Motors

minority ownership program, and serving as president of the African American Dealers Association.

A significant part of Easley’s legacy also involves his contributions to Rise Up Academy, he co-founded in 1999 with Dr. Paul A. Stoot Sr. Rise Up Academy provides early learning and after-school programs for children ages 2½ to 12, with a focus on serving low-income Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) families.

“Kenny was not just a Hall of Famer or a Seahawks legend to me, he was family,” Dr. Stoot Sr provided in a statement to the Lynnwood Times. “Someone I trusted, laughed with, prayed with, and built a dream with. When Rise Up Academy was nothing more than an idea in my heart in 1999, Kenny was the first one to say he believed in it. He handed me the very first donation, one thousand dollars, and stood by my side as we opened our doors.”

In the new school being built, Dr. Stoot informed the Lynnwood Times that it

will be named the “Kenny Easley” site after a man who paved the way for hundreds of children to receive high-quality academics and nutritious meals that bridged the achievement gap.

Easley’s involvement with Rise Up Academy also included hosting the annual Celebrity Golf Classic, such as the 14th edition in July 2025 at Mill Creek Country Club, which raised over \$270,000 to fund programs, campus development, and student resources.

“Kenny’s legacy lives in every classroom at Rise Up Academy, said Dr. Stoot Sr. “It lives in every child who finds their footing and in every dream we continue to fight for. My brother, thank you for believing in me, for believing in this mission, and for giving so much of yourself to this community. We lost two greats this week: Lenny Wilkens and Kenny Easley. Their impact will outlive us all.”

Easley Jr is survived by his wife, Gail, and children Kendrick, Gabrielle, and Giordanna.

from page 1 SAUDI ARABIA

Tunisia.

President Trump has forged an exceptionally close relationship with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) since 2017.

Back in June 2017, Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud removed his nephew, interior minister Mohammed bin Nayef, as heir apparent and elevated Mohammed bin Salman to crown prince—a move endorsed by the royal family’s Allegiance Council.

In October 2017, now as Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, he told investors in Riyadh, “We are returning to what we were before, a country of moderate Islam that is open to all religions and to the world.”

By November 2017, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, chaired a newly formed anti-corruption committee that ordered the detention of hundreds of prominent princes, ministers, and businessmen, including billionaire Prince Al Waleed bin Talal among them—called the 2017–2019 Saudi

Arabian purge.

The purge consolidated political power in the hands of MBS. The detainees were confined at the Ritz-Carlton hotel in Riyadh with banks accounts frozen. Allegations against detainees included money laundering, bribery, extortion, and taking advantage of public office for personal gain; many reached financial settlements with the government totaling over \$100 billion.

Key achievements of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman since becoming Crown Prince in June of 2017 are:

- Launched and accelerated Vision 2030 (2016 plan, fully implemented post-2017), aiming to reduce oil dependency from ~70% of budget revenue to under 50% by 2030.
- Created the Public Investment Fund (PIF) as a \$900+ billion sovereign wealth fund (2025 valuation); invested globally in Uber, Lucid, Newcastle United, and domestic mega-projects.
- Founded landmark giga-projects: NEOM (futuristic city), The Red

Sea Project, Qiddiya entertainment city, and AIUla heritage tourism site.

- Non-oil GDP growth averaged ~4–6% annually (2018–2025), with non-oil exports rising from ~16% to over 30% of total exports.
- Achieved first budget surplus in nearly a decade in 2022; Saudi Arabia became the fastest-growing G20 economy in 2022–2023.
- Allowed women to drive (June 2018) and eased male guardianship laws.
- Reopened cinemas after 35-year ban (2018); developed local film and entertainment industry.
- Introduced tourist visas (2019), attracting 100+ million visitors by 2024.
- Reduced influence of religious police; moderated school curricula.
- Hosted major global events: Formula 1 Saudi GP, WWE, Riyadh Season festivals, and LIV Golf.
- Female labor-force participation rose from 19% in 2017 to over 37% by 2025 (one of the fastest global increases).

- Raised minimum marriage age, allowed women to live alone, travel without permission, and obtain passports independently.
- Ended Qatar diplomatic blockade (2021 AIUla agreement).
- Brokered Saudi–Iran détente (China-mediated deal, March 2023); restored diplomatic ties.
- Intervened diplomatically in Sudan conflict and Yemen (2022–2025 truce efforts).
- Positioned Saudi Arabia as a leading voice in the Global South; hosted Ukraine–Russia talks and joined BRICS (2024).
- Localized ~70% of defense spending inside the kingdom (up from <2% in 2016) via Saudi Arabian Military Industries (SAMI).
- Scaled back Yemen military campaign after 2022 ceasefire while maintaining influence.
- Launched national AI strategy; positioned Riyadh as regional tech hub.
- Advanced nuclear energy cooperation and renewable projects (e.g., Sakaka solar plant).
- Secured 2034 FIFA World Cup hosting rights.

Ballmer Group announces up to \$1.7 billion for early education programs in WA state

By CARLEEN JOHNSON

[THE CENTER SQUARE]—Washington state Gov. Bob Ferguson on Wednesday announced a huge philanthropic commitment to the state's Early Childhood Education and Assessment Program, with the Ballmer Group committed to donating up to \$170 million per year for the next decade.

The boost comes months after Washington lawmakers, facing a potential budget shortfall, made substantial cuts to this session to programs serving early ECEAP infants through age 3.

Due to the shortfall, the Washington Department of Children, Youth & Families, which oversees early learning, had to cut costs, settling on reductions to the Fair Start for Kids Act. The reductions include a \$70 million cut to ECEAP and a pause to its roughly \$70 million planned expansion, according to an analysis by the advocacy group Start Early Washington.

During a Wednesday press briefing at the Denise Louis Education Center in Seattle, Andi Smith, National Behavioral Health executive director with the Ballmer Group, announced a decade-long commitment to early education in Washington.

"Today, I'm proud to announce that Ballmer Group is committing to fund up to 10,000 new school-day ECEAP seats per year for the next 10 years. This grant is structured as a resource to the state to grow access for families and, fully realized, will amount to a commitment of about \$170 million a year in new ECEAP funding for the next decade," Smith said.

Smith said the funding commitment is aimed at stabilizing the state's promise



November 11, 2025, press conference in Seattle with Governor Bob Ferguson announcing Ballmer Foundation investment in Washington state of \$170 million per year for ten years for Early Childhood Education.

to families and providers.

"To let providers plan ahead to expand capacity and serve more families. The grant will be available for the state to grow the number of seats by expanding the number of kids who will have access to pre-K year over year. And in partnership, the state commits to maintaining current public funding to ensure that every dollar means more access for families," he continued.

Ferguson said the massive commitment to early learning is hard to calculate.

"It'd be hard to quantify how significant that investment will be for our state. The studies show that this program helps kids get ready when they go to kindergarten and start grade school. And look, I don't think you have to be an expert or read a report to know that," Governor Ferguson said. "I think any parent un-

derstands that intuitively, right? If your kid is getting that extra attention, you just know that intuitively. You know what that means."

Sen. Claire Wilson, D-Federal Way, who serves as vice chair of the Senate Early Learning Committee, attended the Wednesday press conference. She spoke with The Center Square just after the event.

"To be able to lead and support this legislation to make this happen means a lot," said Wilson, speaking to the fact that lawmakers will have to pass legislation to accept the Ballmer funding for ECEAP.

Wilson said she still regrets the cuts they were forced to make during this year's session, ending funding for many ECEAP programs.

"That's still a focus for me. I don't know what the reality is going to be and whether we're going to be able to fund targeted slots, but perhaps this investment gives us some breathing room ... so this is huge for us," she said.

Washington State Republican Party Chair Jim Walsh responded to the Ballmer investment in ECEAP via a text message.

"ECEAP is a good program that helps many Washington families and kids. It's good to see philanthropic groups supporting ECEAP," Walsh told The Center Square. "Of course, if the current governor didn't waste so much taxpayer money on grifty green energy Homeless Industrial Complex schemes, the state Operating Budget could fund good program like ECEAP more completely."

from page 3 **LYNNWOOD CC**

raising property taxes .17 cents to pay for essential services, when renters such as him have had to pay upwards of \$4,000/a year in rent increases, is "frankly insulting."

Council member Decker disagreed with Coelho, adding that it is "not insulting to have a difficult and long conversation around taxes when we're talking about increasing taxes again in the City of Lynnwood."

Decker's comments seemed to directly refer to the passing of Lynnwood's budget in late 2024, which called for a 52% property tax increase.

"Referring to this conversation as insulting, actually does a disgrace, a disservice, to our community and to members of this council. This is what we were voted to do. The worst thing we can do in this city is raise taxes, and if it's insulting to fight for the people of this city, to keep taxes low, then I'm going to keep insulting until we get to the end of it," said Decker adding that property tax increases, in turn, typically affect rent prices because landlords tend to increase rents when their property taxes go up.

Council member Robert Leutwyler chimed in to remind the public, and council, that the city currently does not have enough money to maintain its roads, parks, and other services and if council decides not to move forward

with a property tax levy increase now, it could ultimately impact residents more in the long run as the price of services go up. An example he gave is the city's Wastewater Treatment Plant, which due to aging and outdated infrastructure has increased its rates to offset to costs of improvements – rates that adversely affect residents.

"Rather than pay these obligations in the present day, if we say keep taxes as they are, that could be a problem for tomorrow," said Leutwyler. "There's a reason why there hasn't been any credible solution to keeping the city going other than raising taxes. All I've heard is we can sell park land, we could cut an arbitrary number of more employees without considering quality of service impacts, we have a new jail that's eating up \$5 million from our budget, we have these obligations that we've inherited that we need to pay for."

2025-2026 Budget discussion

Finance Director Myer continued a presentation on potential new revenue streams for the city which included the aforementioned property tax levy, in addition to increase business license fees, utility taxes on certain utilities, permit fees, recreation center service fees, and vehicle tab fees.

Even with Lynnwood Mayor Christine Frizzell's budget plan, and its associated cuts, Myer noted that the City still needs to bridge a gap of \$8 million to get the city within the state statutory financial

requirements.

As for the remaining multi-million dollar deficit, the City will need to have a much longer discussion for its 2026 year at a later date, Myer added.

This was a continuation of an ongoing conversation on how the City will address its \$10.7 million budget deficit. Myer said council will be receiving briefings this Wednesday, November 19, with additional information and the agenda item will return next week at council's next meeting.

Lynnwood Municipal Code changes

In the wake of Councilwoman Derica Escamilla's public backlash over her dog terrorizing her neighborhood, resulting in the injury several people, animals, and even the deaths of two dogs (by way of euthanasia, not a direct result of the bite), Lynnwood City Council President Nick Coelho reached out to the Lynnwood Police Department to review its current dangerous animal code.

Lynnwood Police Chief Cole Langdon's findings was that Lynnwood's current Municipal Code is sufficient to allow Animal Enforcement officers to respond to incidents of a dangerous, or potentially dangerous, animals.

The current LMC defines a dangerous animal as one who inflicts bites on humans or domestic animals on public or private property, or an animal or chases/approaches anyone on a public street in

a menacing fashion or apparent attitude of attack.

Exclusions include whether the animal has potentially been tormented by someone in the past, or if the victim is currently in the process of committing a crime, to name a few.

Chief Langdon's suggested edits were minor, just recommending a clear definition of what "severe injury" means, as well as adding a line that would consider whether an animal has previously caused injury to someone, or a domestic animal, when forming a dangerous animal designation.

Councilwoman Escamilla had her concerns regarding a mandatory six-foot fence for a "dangerous animal," and conditional euthanasia requirement.

Council also discussed recodifying Title 13, of its Municipal Code, which relates to the City's "Waterworks Utility" (water, sewer and surface water systems). The language changes include definitions, rates, and billing changes to better align with state requirements. The current code hasn't been updated in some time, Director Myer said Monday, is in need of simple updates to reflect the current time and rate system.

Both proposed LMC changes discussed Monday were simply that, a discussion, with no action by council. These proposed changes are scheduled return for a vote in a future meeting.

Scott Presler tours WA state to rally signatures for new voter ID initiative

By MARIO LOTMORE



Scan to watch the full in-person event

MARYSVILLE—Scott Presler, son of a retired Navy Captain and founder of Early Vote Action, spoke to approximately 300 at Reset Church in Marysville on Sunday on the need for true grassroots efforts in Washington state to collect signatures for Initiative Measure IL26-126. The initiative, sponsored by the Washington State Republican Party, would require voter ID and proof of citizenship to vote, replacing the current “honor system” where applicants simply check a box affirming citizenship on the registration form.

“I want to make it clear,” Presler told the crowd, “I am here to make sure that we are going to have election integrity in our elections. But the only way that we do that is through initiatives, through ballot measures to elect good people in the office.”

If passed by voters in November 2026, new registrants must provide acceptable government-issued documents proving citizenship (e.g., birth certificates, passports, or certain state IDs). County auditors would be required to audit existing voter rolls by cross-referencing with the Department of Licensing and other records; voters lacking documented proof would be notified and given time to resolve the issue (potentially requiring in-person presentation), or face removal from the rolls.

The new law, which aligns state practices with federal election laws, would also establish uniform statewide standards for verification while allowing local election officials some flexibility in implementation.

In Washington state, Presler stated, the initiative process allows citizens to bypass the Democrat-controlled government trifecta—Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches of government—impeding voter integrity legislation.

“Unless they’re gonna nuke the filibuster, Congress is not gonna be able to pass the SAVE Act,” said Presler sharing the importance of the voter id initiative to Washingtonians. “It’s not gonna be able to pass legislation to perform election integrity.”

The “Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act” or the “SAVE Act,” introduced by Rep. Chip Roy (R-TX21), if passed by Congress, would require individuals registering to vote to present documentary proof of U.S. citizenship in person. It would also mandate that states establish or strengthen ongoing voter-roll maintenance programs to identify and remove non-citizens who may have been inadvertently registered, including through real-time cross-checks with federal citizenship databases.

Sunday’s event was the start of a five-day tour across nine locations throughout Washington state by the conservative firebrand who was the unstoppable force behind Donald J Trump’s 2024 landslide victories in battleground states. He is focusing efforts to collect



Scott Presler at Reset Church in Marysville on November 16, 2025, speaking to approximately 300 attendees on the importance of community engagement and election integrity. Lynnwood Times | Mario Lotmore.

the remaining signatures for IL26-126—needing over 300,000 by January 2, 2026, with half already gathered.

Presler also encouraged support for Let’s Go Washington initiatives’ IL26-001, aimed at strengthening communication between parents and schools, and IL26-638, intended to protect fairness in girls’ sports by addressing biological males in women’s competitions and facilities.

“And although I am pretty, I know that I’m a biological man,” Presler said. “And a man is a provider and a protector. And the ‘men’ of this state of Washington have failed women. And they’ve failed our girls. And they have failed our daughters.”

He directed attendees to sign the petitions on-site, which many did, and take blank forms to collect 20 more signatures each to meet signature requirements.

Presler’s Washington state tour schedule includes:

- Sunday, November 16: Gig Harbor High School, 1-2 p.m., Gig Harbor; Reset Church, 4-6 p.m., Marysville.
- Monday, November 17: Battle Ground Event Center, 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Battle Ground; Grays Harbor GOP Office, 3:30-5:30 p.m., Aberdeen.
- Tuesday, November 18: Island View Worship Center, 5 p.m., Richland.
- Wednesday, November 19: Flame & Brew, 12 p.m., Yakima; The Black Diamond, 6 p.m., Spokane.
- Thursday, November 20: Crossroads Park Theater, 12-3 p.m., Bellevue; Elysian Event and Conference Center, 5-8 p.m., Kent.

WSRP Chair Jim Walsh shared with the Lynnwood Times that by utilizing the voter initiative process to boost conservative turnout in the 2026 general election coupled with Presler’s efforts,

he anticipates Republican gains in the Washington State Legislature.

“He’s already turbocharging our signature gathering,” Walsh told the Lynnwood Times on Presler’s efforts bridging the enthusiasm gap with voters. “And it’s helping the other petitions as well. So, there’s no doubt he’s helping already with turnout.... We’re on track, and hopefully we can finish strong”

Walsh shared that left-wing groups have launched a campaign of misinformation falsely stating that the voter id initiative is a “poll tax” and that “people [need] to get an enhanced driver’s license.”

“A poll tax is a tax you have to pay, or a fee, in order to vote,” said Walsh. “This is about registering different things. So, the poll tax argument is very deceitful and misleading. And they know it is. They’re just lying.”

During his address to attendees at Reset Church, Walsh clarified further misinformation allegedly reported by the Seattle Times falsely stating that the voter id initiative would end mail-in voting.

“What it does is it charges the local election officials in 38 counties, that’s your county auditor—and in King County, it is a separately elected elections administrator—to essentially check the citizenship,” Walsh said. “So, it’s the local election official at the county level who has to see proof of citizenship before registering someone to vote. Now, the initiative doesn’t do anything about voting. It doesn’t change mail-in voting, and the Seattle Times screwed that all up by saying it would end mail-in voting. It doesn’t end mail-in voting.”

The League of Women Voters opposes Initiative Measure IL26-126 in Washington state, viewing it as part of broader efforts to complicate voter registration and maintenance. They argue the measure is burdensome for eligible voters, costly for counties to implement, and unnecessary, citing that “noncitizen voting” is negligible according to var-

ious studies. The organization further dismisses the need for voter id requirements stating that federal and state laws already prohibit noncitizen voting with penalties including fines, imprisonment, and deportation.

Presler opened with his personal journey from dog walker to citizen activist. He stressed the importance of community engagement to “ground-up” victories and argued that such involvement leads to Republican victories by organizing at the local level: mayor, city council, school board, state representative, and state senate.

Following President Barack Obama’s 2012 reelection win, he then understood that without engaging in his community through door knocking and get-out-the-vote activities, candidates don’t win. So, he started volunteering for campaigns, including traveling to Texas to help elect Governor Greg Abbott. He also supported Donald J Trump’s 2016 election.

In 2019 he organized and led a trash cleanup event in Baltimore that inspired other similar events in major U.S. cities—Atlanta, Austin, Chicago, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Portland, and San Francisco—proving to himself that engagement doesn’t only have to be political and further reinforcing his belief that regular citizens can achieve more than government through acts of community service.

“Seven days after I announced we were going to Baltimore, we got 200 volunteers and we picked up 12 tons of trash in 12 hours in one single day in the most dangerous streets of America,” Presler said. “And truly that day I realized it edified why I am a Republican and why I’m a conservative. Because I believe that concerned citizens coming together in an act of love could do more good than the government with all of its power, all of its money, all of its might ever could.”

Continued PAGE 12

Nourishing Network breaks record in students served, volunteers and donors now needed more than ever

By KIENAN BRISCOE

EDMONDS—When Nourishing Network, a Foundation for Edmonds School District program, first launched in 2014 they served 80 food-insecure kids meals on weekends, over the course of the schoolyear. It was a pipedream, at the time, to eventually grow the program into serving up to 300 students long term – an ambitious vision the team struggled to figure out logistically but were, nevertheless, up for the challenge.

This year, in an unprecedented and a staggering turn of events, the Foundation for Edmonds School District’s Nourishing Network is on track to serve up to 1,000 kids, all from food insecure families who rely upon free, or reduced priced, meals at public school as their primary source of nutrition.

It’s a number both deeply rewarding and deeply concerning, said Thame Fuller, Community Director for Nourishing Network. On one hand, it showcases just how much a grassroots organization can pull off with the right partnerships and community support. On the other hand, it sheds light on how dire the region’s food insecurity, and economic struggles impact residents each, and every, day.

“It hurts to see the lives of students and families who have already been struggling with food insecurity get even more difficult, but it is wonderful to see the generosity of our community rising to meet the increased challenge. I am thankful I get to help connect those who are eager to give with those who need support right now,” Fuller told the Lynnwood Times.

As of Friday, November 7, Nourishing Network has 621 students registered to receive weekend meals each week. Considering the school year is just three months in (and the Nourishing Network begins each year with a blank slate), as well as considering past years’ data trends, this number is projected to hit close to 1,000 by the end of the year as more families sign up.

For example, in just one day, from Thursday, November 6, to the publication of this article on Friday, November 7, 60 more students have signed up for the weekend meals program. There are still 137 days left in the school year.

This is by far the most students Nourishing Network has ever served, even during the pandemic-driven shutdown (when public schools were closed) by more than double. Yet while the need for food is greater than ever before, the cost of groceries continues to rise, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics National Index who reported a 3.5 percent increase in groceries over the year—driven by national inflation, potential tariffs, and state taxes. Meanwhile, a recent UW survey reported 55% of Washingtonian families suffered some sort of food insecurity just last year.



Nourishing Network, a Foundation for Edmonds School District program. Source: Lynnwood Times | Kienan Briscoe.

“Now more than ever, children and families in the Edmonds School District are turning to the Foundation’s Nourishing Network for help,” said Deborah Brandi, Foundation for Edmonds School District executive director. “We’re seeing a 33% increase in students served compared to this time last year, and the cost of food is up 22%. Every dollar and every can of food truly matters right now. We’re asking our community to step forward to help keep shelves stocked and students nourished so they can continue to learn and thrive.”

At Edmonds Heights K-12 in Edmonds, where Nourishing Network has set up its food pantry, the program’s storage space is ever expanding.

When the Nourishing Network first launched, the K-12 school-parent partnership campus generously provided an unused utility closet to be used to store food – which, at the time, was donated by local nonprofits, faith groups, and rotary clubs. Over the years, as Nourishing Network’s capacity and volume increased, so did its storage; from a single utility closet to a detached shed, to an administrative office, to now an entire unused shower and locker room turned warehouse – pallets of shelf-stable foods as far as the eye can see.

But through it all, no matter how many children sign up for Nourishing Network’s weekend, or summer meals, the program has never once stopped to think if they should put a cap on the children it serves. Community Director Thame Fuller told the Lynnwood Times, staying true to its original vision of ensuring

students and families in the district have consistent access to nutritious food, particularly during out-of-school times.

“I’m happy to report that we’ve never once had to say we didn’t have enough food for a child,” said Fuller. “We’ve come close a couple of times, but we’ve always made it work.”

Fuller chalks it up to the incredible “network” of community partners Nourishing Network has amassed over the years including Whole Foods, North Sound Church, Verdant Health Commission, Hazel Miller Foundation, Safeco Insurance, and local municipalities to name a few.

While Nourishing Network continues its weekend meal program to this day, its capacity has grown in more ways than just the children it serves, expanding into a summer meals program, holiday meal kits, and even at-home delivery to meet kids where they are.

The at-home delivery model was originally implemented during the COVID-19 outbreak, when schools were shut down, but Nourishing Network has continued to deliver after noticing a greater number of participants, with children not having to worry about the stigma of picking up a free meal at school, in front of their friends and peers.

Though the focus remains on food insecure children, the program holds pop-up pantries across seven different locations where they distribute household items for the entire family. These items in-

clude hygiene products, feminine products, paper products, food, and even clothing.

Nourishing Network heavily relies on volunteerism to stay afloat in its operations with volunteers working Thursday through Friday processing, packaging, and delivering roughly 8,400 food items a week.

Just last year Nourishing Network distributed nearly 133,000 pounds of food in the form of 16,957 weekend meal kits, 5,278 free lunches for children over the summer, 83,832 food items at its pop-up pantries, and 920 complete holiday meals over winter break.

But the need for both volunteers and donations has never been greater.

Food insecurity drastically impacts a student’s ability to learn, according to the National Library of Medicine, adversely affecting a child’s ability to perform on tests, and retain and process information. In addition, hungry students have also been linked to irritability and aggression leading to school fights and problems at home, as well as contributing to generational cycles of poverty.

For Nourishing Network, providing free meals to students is more than just feeding a hungry mouth, it’s an investment for the future by setting today’s children up for success to be tomorrow’s leaders.

To volunteer at the Nourishing Network visit <https://foundationesd.org/get-involved/volunteer/>



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Peace of Mind Brewing & Coffee Opens Coffeehouse



Inside the spacious Peace of Mind Brewing & Coffee. Source: Peace of Mind Brewing & Coffee.

By MARIO LOTMORE

LYNNWOOD—Peace of Mind Brewing & Coffee marked the grand opening of its expanded coffee shop on November 10, transforming the family-owned brewery's taproom into a daytime venue for the local community.

"We built this place with our community in mind," Brandon Molina, the brewery's owner said. "Turning our brewery into a daytime coffeehouse felt like the natural next step. This space has always had great energy, and we're excited to open our doors earlier in the day for folks who want good coffee, a welcoming seat, and a place to slow down, be creative, and feel inspired."

The establishment, located at 18411 Hwy 99, which reached its three-year anniversary in August 2025, now operates as Lynnwood's largest coffeehouse space. It extends service hours to mornings, providing an option for residents seeking a relaxed environment outside of home or work. The coffeehouse is open Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., and on weekends from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Founded as a neighborhood gathering spot, Peace of Mind Brewing & Coffee aims to function as a "third space" — a neutral area for social in-

teraction and personal pursuits. The venue combines elements of a casual café with the innovative atmosphere of an independent brewery, managed by a father-daughter duo.

Molina initially developed the beer program in collaboration with his son upon the business's launch. For the coffee initiative, he has partnered with his daughter, Gabrielle Molina, who brings 12 years of barista experience. Gabrielle recently transitioned from a career in corporate events and ticketing to focus on this family project.

The coffee menu features a complete selection of espresso-based drinks, alongside Red Bull Italian sodas. Beans are sourced from Fulcrum Coffee Roasters, a Seattle-based operation with over 25 years in the industry. The spacious layout accommodates remote workers, artists, readers, and others desiring an extended stay.

Peace of Mind Brewing & Coffee is situated in Lynnwood and offers accessibility for various activities, including remote work, reading, artistic endeavors, or casual socializing. The family-operated business prioritizes an art-focused interior that fosters comfort and interpersonal connections, serving its coffee selections in a setting designed for prolonged visits.

LETTER-TO-EDITOR

The Technical and Ethical Failure of Mass Surveillance in Lynnwood

As someone who takes privacy and the 4th Amendment seriously, I have grave misgivings about the surveillance contract Lynnwood has with Flock. In what LPD claims was a misconfiguration, they exposed this surveillance database to outside agencies, which used it for immigration-related searches. This is contrary to explicit promises made to the Lynnwood City Council. As a Systems Engineer, I find this excuse highly concerning. A 'checkbox error' that violates state law and civil rights isn't a glitch; it's a failure of governance and architecture.

Flock operates a 'digital dragnet', creating a database of where every person travels, regardless of whether they have committed a crime. Your daily patterns are being logged, stored, and shared. No warrant is required to access this database, and as public records requests have shown, neither a valid justification nor a case number is required to track your history.

Flock states that our network is 'encrypted' so that only LPD and authorized agencies can access it; however, the City does not hold the encryption keys. Flock does. In the IT world, this is a critical security failure. It means the City cannot guarantee the safety of the data because we do not hold the master key. If Flock is compelled by a federal agency or breached by hackers, Lynnwood is powerless to stop the data exfiltration. Similar ALPR networks to those operated by Flock have been hacked in the past, resulting in the entire database being publicly released. What happens if Flock gets hacked? That is a bell you can't un-ring once your travel patterns are released onto the internet for all to see.

In the 2012 case 'United States v. Jones', the Supreme Court ruled that a warrant is required to place a GPS tracking device on a car, as otherwise doing so would violate the 4th Amendment. In the 2019 case 'Carpenter v. United States', the Supreme Court ruled that a warrant is required to access historical cellphone location information, recognizing that tracking movements is an invasive act that violates reasonable expectations of privacy. There are currently 4th Amendment lawsuits in progress against Flock and similar ALPR (automated license plate reader) technologies, which have not yet reached the Supreme Court but are well underway.

The argument Flock makes is that, as these cameras record people in public, residents have no reasonable expectations of privacy. It is true that if a stranger took a photo of you in public, they would be within their legal rights. However, if said stranger started following you around the city, taking photographs on a regular basis, and building a history of where you travel, that quickly crosses the line into stalking and harassment. Cameras being in public locations should not grant limitless rights to build a database of where people travel.

A recent ruling from the Skagit Coun-

ty Superior Court has found that all data from Flock is subject to public records requests. Anyone can request dumps of an entire city's network for broad periods of time. Ironically, law enforcement leaders have publicly worried that this transparency could enable stalking. This is absolutely correct, as evidenced by the many cases where law enforcement officers have been proven to use this network to stalk their partners. This technology is simply too ripe for abuse and has already established a clear pattern of being abused in the real world.

The Berkeley Police Accountability Board found that ALPR's "...did not result in a reduction of crime generally or auto theft specifically, during the period measured". And yet, the city of Lynnwood has entered into a 2-year, \$171,153.50 contract to surveil law-abiding citizens. The primary purpose of an ALPR network is to detect and track stolen vehicles; however, consider the trends of auto thefts over time. In 2023, thefts peaked during the 'Kia Boyz' social media phenomenon. According to the Washington Auto Theft Prevention Authority, thefts statewide dropped by 31% in 2024, long before Lynnwood's cameras were installed. Furthermore, data from the National Insurance Crime Bureau shows that auto thefts in Washington state dropped by another 42% in the first half of 2025. We are on track for historic lows without this surveillance. The drop is primarily due to software updates and steering wheel locks on previously vulnerable Kia vehicles, not a camera network that didn't even go live until June 29, 2025.

In conditions of low visibility, such as the rain and fog we enjoy for much of the year, these camera systems have reduced read accuracy. This increases the risk of inaccurately flagging a vehicle for police intervention. Families have been pulled over at gunpoint due to such misreads, resulting in 7-figure settlements in other cities, the likes of which Lynnwood's budget cannot afford. Our weather conditions put us at risk of a potentially dangerous interaction with the police.

Our city is currently experiencing a budget crisis. Is it fiscally responsible to enter into a \$171k contract that exposes the city to liability while undermining our fundamental right to privacy? That money is better spent on community programs, housing, or human-based policing, not an automated system that erodes public trust.

For more information, please visit DeFlockLynnwood.com, where you will find sources for the above claims, the records requests, and contact information to urge the Lynnwood City Council to expand their current pause of the network into a full cancellation of the contract.

The next Lynnwood City Council meeting is Monday, the 24th, 6pm at City Hall. Please come and have your voice heard to restore privacy to our city.

Quinn Van Order, Lynnwood

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from page 1 **STARBUCKS**

solving legal issues. Bring us NEW proposals that address these issues so we can finalize a contract. Until then, you'll see us and our allies on the picket line," said Eisen.

However, according to Starbucks, the union – which represents less than 4% of Starbucks' 240,000 total employees – is the entity who is refusing to negotiate.

Back in April, 2025, for example, despite over 200 hours of negotiation and more than 30 tentative agreements reached, Workers United left the bargaining table and took "an incomplete framework" to their delegates for a vote, a Starbucks spokesperson told the Lynnwood Times.

At the beginning of the month, Chief Partner Officer Sara Kelly, issued a letter to all Starbucks Partners (what the company calls its employees due to being issued shares), reinstating the company's commitment to bargaining with the union, in addition to listing of investments the company has made recently for its employees. Some of those investments include \$500 million on Green Apron partner hours to get more workers on the roster, committing to internal promotional opportunities, meeting 85% of its workforce with preferred scheduling, as well as implementing tools that assist workers in working shifts that best suit their schedules and lifestyles.

"We're disappointed that Workers United, who represents less than 4% of our partners, called for a strike instead of returning to the bargaining table. Less than 1% of our coffeehouses have experienced any level of disruption, and the vast majority of our 240,000 partners are coming to work ready to serve customers," Jaci Anderson, a Starbucks spokesperson, told the Lynnwood Times. "We've been very clear – when the union is ready to come back, we're ready to talk. The facts show people like working at Starbucks. Partner engagement is up, turnover is nearly half the industry average, and we get more than 1 million job applications a year. Any agreement needs to reflect the reality that Starbucks offers the best job in retail, including more than \$30 an hour on average in pay and benefits for hourly partners."

Anderson continued that the assertion that the contract with Workers United could be settled for a day's worth of sales is an uninformed assumption at best, intended to make a complex discussion sound simple.

In addition, according to Anderson, some of the union's proposals would "significantly affect store operations and customer experience", such as the ability to shut down channels like Mobile Order when there are just five orders in the queue.



Photo Source: Workers United

Workers United proposed a pay increase of 65% immediately and 77% over three years with additional payments for certain working conditions. For example, the union demanded additional pay for working within three hours of opening or closing, working during the weekend, receiving inventory, and working on a day when Starbucks runs a promotion.

Anderson informed the Lynnwood Times that these are not "serious, evidence-based" proposals.

Unable to reach an agreement, Workers United voted to strike, beginning on Thursday, November 13.

At the Seattle picket lines on Pike Street, Seattle Mayor-elect Katie Wilson spoke in defense of the union saying:

"I am proud to join them [the Starbucks Workers Union] on their picket line and proud to say loud and clear, I am not buying Starbucks and you should not either," said Mayor-elect Wilson.

The strike impacts the following cities: Anaheim, CA; Long Beach, CA; San Diego, CA; Santa Clarita, CA; Santa Cruz, CA; Scotts Valley, CA; Seal Beach, CA; Soquel, CA; Colorado Springs, CO; Lafayette, CO; Alpharetta, GA; Roswell, GA; Des Plaines, IL; Evanston, IL; Geneva, IL; Chanhassen,

MN; Minneapolis, MN; Saint Louis, MO; Brooklyn, NY; New York, NY; Columbus, OH; Lewis Center, OH; Reynoldsburg, OH; Upper Arlington, OH; Worthington, OH; Beaverton, OR; Damascus, OR; Eugene, OR; Gresham, OR; Portland, OR; Dickson City, PA; Lancaster, PA; Philadelphia, PA; Pittsburgh, PA; Dallas, TX; Denton, TX; Farmers Branch, TX; Mechanicsville, VA; Richmond, VA; Redmond, WA; and Seattle, WA.

Back in December of 2021, Starbucks baristas won their first union election establishing the Starbucks Workers Union.

Two years later, in November 2023, the union led what was called "the Red Cup Rebellion" – striking on the company's annual Red Cup Day, one of Starbucks' consistently busiest days of the year where they distribute complementary plastic red cups to holiday drink purchasers.

"We had a great day – 99% of our coffeehouses remained open and welcoming customers and we exceeded our sales expectations across company-operated coffeehouses in North America, making it the best Red Cup Day ever," a Starbucks spokesperson told the Lynnwood Times when asked how this year's event turned out.

In 2024, Starbucks and Workers United announced a Path Forward, heralded as an historic breakthrough, where the company committed to negotiation and foundational framework for contracts.

Negotiations began that year but by December, 2024, the union accused Starbucks of backtracking on its agreed-upon Path Forward promise and waged the largest-ever ULP "Strike Before Christmas" in Starbucks' history with more than 5,000 participants.

One year after bargaining began, more than 500 union delegates voted to reject a foundational framework package that included Starbucks' latest economic proposals, which failed to improve wages or benefits in the first year of the contract and didn't put forth proposals to address chronic understaffing, the union said.

Now, union workers have returned to the picket lines demanding better hours to address understaffing, improved take-home pay, and the protections workers feel entitled to do their job.

According to the union, the remaining dispute is over less than a single average day's sales, less than 4 months of CEO Niccol's 2024 compensation, less than one quarter of one percent of the company's annual revenue. However, Starbucks says this is an "uninformed assumption."

"I've never seen an employer act with such reckless disregard for breaking labor laws over and over again. I've also never seen an employer that makes so much money offer workers so little," said Lynne Fox, President of Workers United, which represents 90,000 workers across industries including Starbucks baristas. "Starbucks is trying to break workers' momentum through union busting and delays and intimidation tactics. But it's not working. Instead, it's only fueled baristas' organizing and our resolve. If Starbucks truly wants to rebuild its brand, it is time to stop stonewalling, start bargaining, and address its ongoing violations of federal labor law."

The average Starbucks barista makes \$15 to \$16 an hour in the U.S.—or \$19.38 per hour in Washington state—according to job site posting boards such as Indeed. Starbucks employees also receive a range of benefits including health coverage (medical, dental, vision), financial and retirement plans (401k match, stock equity), and educational assistance like free college tuition.

Still, for a company who makes nearly \$40 billion a year, according to Stock Analysis, and who's CEO, Brian Niccol, received approximately \$95.8 million in total compensation for his first four months in late 2024, the union says this is not enough.

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Presler then founded Early Vote Action in 2023 after the 2020 election, in an "all of the above" approach to voting and worked with Amish communities in Pennsylvania to utilize mail-in ballots which resulted in increased voter participation on Election Day as their traditional wedding period encompass that day. Through massive voter registration efforts by his Early Vote Action network in Pennsylvania, some 50,000 voters were registered by 2024, which he attributes to winning the state and contributed to President Trump's 2024 reelection victory.

"One thing that I love that Donald Trump has done for our party and done for our country is he has taught us how to fight," said Presler. "And I say peacefully fight, of course. We fight with ballots, not bullets; we are not the left... we are not the Democrat Party. But furthermore, I say, especially to these people outside [protesting], to every Republican in this room, I am tired of being the nice guy. I am tired of rolling over... The MO going forward of our party if we want to take back our country is we are going to fight fire with a gosh darn flame thrower."

Presler outlined plans to extend similar initiative promoting efforts in Oregon, where he aims to end automatic vote-by-mail, and California, to also implement voter ID requirements. He framed these efforts as part of a broader strategy to drive voter turnout in 2026, flipping House seats from Democrat to Republican and protecting Trump's America First agenda.

Presler warned of complacency, noting recent Democrat gains—governorships in New Jersey and Virginia, and three Democratic Supreme Court justices in Pennsylvania. He criticized "MAGA" voters as often participating only every

four years and urged continuous activism and voting in every election to avoid losses in 2025, 2026, and 2027.

"My goal and my hope is by empowering the people to understand that it is you who are the masters of your destiny," said Presler. "Even if you're not happy with the party right now, I implore you, knowing the leadership of Jim, join WAGOP.ORG. Become a precinct committee official. Become the PC chair, the PC captain, and let's create a party and an infrastructure and an apparatus that is going to steer the Democrats and get out Ferguson in 2026."