



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL | DISTRICT 3

**COUNCILMEMBER KSHAMA SAWANT**

Tuesday September 21, 2021

Dear Executive Secretary Treasurer Shapiro and elected officers of the Western Washington Carpenters Union,

I am writing to you in solidarity with the courageous strike action taken by union carpenters in their struggle for a fair contract, demanding fully-paid parking, fully-funded benefits, family-supporting wages, improved protections against harassment, and a three-year contract along with all building and construction trades. My office, and my political organization Socialist Alternative, send you all our best wishes for a resounding victory. If the carpenters succeed, it will not only improve their standards of living and workplace conditions, it will provide a historic boost of confidence to all trades workers and the labor movement. In the context of ongoing attacks on working people, we need to build a powerful labor movement if we're going to turn things around. The carpenter strike is an important step that can provide an example to workers across the country.

We are stronger standing together, united against the bosses, and that's why it's crucial that the Martin Luther King County Labor Council, representing more than 150 unions, has gone on record standing with the carpenters' action!

As you may know, I have sent two public letters in solidarity with your members, one on September 6 and the other on September 17. As I said in my letters, no worker should have to chase overtime, worry about healthcare, retirement, or wages just to get by. We will have your back.

Carpenters have responded with a letter to my office, and to all Seattle City Councilmembers, by writing:

*"Rank and file carpenters have been organizing themselves, having recognized months ago that the proposed wages being offered by the AGC bosses were not keeping up with inflation. It is a grim reality that we cannot afford to raise a family in Seattle, a city that we build. We are grateful to you for reaching out and making clear that you stand behind carpenters' demands for better wages and fully-funded benefits."*

and

*"We hope that you will use your elected position to make further efforts, in coordination with us, to support our strike action. We urge other elected representatives to follow your example."*

As a rank-and-file union member myself, and as a thrice-elected workers' representative, I am proud to stand with union carpenters. I take home only \$40,000, and the rest of my \$140,000 City Council salary after taxes goes into a solidarity fund for workers' movements. **I pledge to donate \$10,000 from this solidarity fund to your strike fund if the carpenters' union sets one up, and I urge labor and community organizations, and progressive elected officials, to contribute as well.** I would also be happy to meet with you and your membership to talk about how we can help build further support for the strike.

Just since the COVID crisis began, American billionaires have become nearly two trillion dollars richer. And the bosses have raked in trillions more over the last decade, while workers fell behind. But when workers fight and win, it inspires workers everywhere. As the fighting Teamsters in 1934 said, "All workers to the unions - All unions to the struggle!"

Solidarity!

Kshama Sawant  
Seattle City Councilmember