

May 22, 2017

M17-014

To: SPEEA Council

From: Mike Shea, NW VP

Subject: **PRE-SUBMITTED NEW BUSINESS:** Statement of Principle Regarding Threats and Acts of Violence Against Union Members and Other Nonviolent Demonstrators

Background

In April 2015, the International Association of Machinists canceled a union certification vote at Boeing South Carolina, citing “an atmosphere of threats, harassment, and unprecedented political interference.” A membership canvassing campaign was stopped due to nonviolent union organizers having been threatened by local residents bearing firearms, and other near-violent altercations.

On January 20, 2017, a nonviolent demonstrator (and Industrial Workers of the World union member, as repeatedly highlighted by some media outlets) at the University of Washington was recklessly shot and critically injured by an opposing demonstrator in claimed “self-defense.” The shooter accompanied her husband, who was witnessed and filmed by media cameramen as “constantly in the fray of the protest.” Washington Administrative Code 478-124-020 prohibits possession of firearms on any University of Washington property. At the time of this writing, King County prosecutors have charged the shooter with first-degree assault (with firearms enhancement) and her husband is charged with third-degree assault. The evidence includes social media postings prior to the event indicating the couple’s intent to agitate and incite violence against demonstrators.

On January 9, 2017, a panel of the North Dakota state senate introduced a controversial “public safety” bill (House Bill 1203) which included a provision that a driver of a vehicle who “unintentionally” strikes demonstrators “is not guilty of an offense.” On February 13, 2017, the North Dakota House of Representatives rejected the bill. However, it is disturbing that lawmakers felt emboldened to introduce a bill with such a barbaric provision in the first place, and that it was dismissed only by a relatively narrow margin.

These events suggest a troubling and unacceptable environment in American society in which some feel emboldened to direct violence, threats, harassment, and intimidation against demonstrators and union members. This is not the “new normal,” nor should it be allowed to become “the new normal” within American society.

Motion

It is moved: The SPEEA Council:

1. Strongly supports the right of nonviolent demonstration and picketing, as protected under the US Constitution and Federal Labor Law.
2. Condemns violence or threats of violence against such demonstrations.
3. Condemns violence or threats of violence against individuals and organizations executing their rights to organize under Federal Labor Law.
4. Condemns acts or behavior which enables or emboldens parties to undertake violent or threatening behavior against those who organize or demonstrate.