

# ILWU #21 ratifies 5-year contract at EGT in Longview

LONGVIEW — The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) signed a five-year collective bargaining agreement with EGT, LLC Feb. 10 covering land-side and ship-side operations at the multinational corporations new grain terminal at the Port of Longview.

The agreement, covering both production and maintenance work, establishes guidelines for a regular Longshore workforce at the facility for day-to-day operations and creates a select pool of employees who will work as needed to service incoming vessels, barges, trains, and other operations at the facility, the ILWU said.

Neither side would disclose any other details about the contract.

Thus ends a bitter year-long, high stakes battle — in court and on the docks — between the union and company over whether EGT would employ ILWU members at its new \$200 million grain terminal. It all started Jan.

23, when Washington Governor Chris Gregoire announced a settlement after secretly meeting with the two sides on more than a dozen occasions.

Since that announcement, Longview-based ILWU Local 21 opened up its hiring hall to EGT, which hired a group of ILWU members — 25 to 35 of them, according to the Longview Daily News. Then on Jan. 30 and 31, the union submitted cards signed by a majority of the workers saying they want to be represented by ILWU Local 21. An arbitrator verified that the cards were authentic on Feb. 1, at which point EGT “voluntarily” recognized ILWU Local 21 as the workers’ bargaining representative.

All this appeared to satisfy legal concerns EGT had expressed when it sued the Port of Longview last year in federal court. A clause in the Port’s lease with EGT said that the company was obligated to observe the Port’s working and wage agreement with

ILWU, but EGT argued that was a “pre-hire” agreement, which would run afoul of the National Labor Relations Act.

Under the terms of Gregoire’s settlement, the Port agreed to drop that clause from the lease, and ILWU and EGT agreed to drop unfair labor practice charges before the National Labor Relations Board. Over the course of the last year more than 200 union members and activists were arrested for blocking EGT-bound trains and for clashes with police. ILWU also agreed to call off a massive protest it was planning for when the first ship arrived to export grain.

On Feb. 7, Hong Kong-flagged MV Full Sources became the first ship to dock at the EGT terminal, to be loaded with wheat bound for Korea. The two sides were still negotiating details of the collective bargaining agreement when it arrived, but ILWU agreed that members would begin loading the ship in a show of good faith. Three days later, a five-year collective bargaining agreement had been ratified.

In a joint press release, EGT’s CEO Larry Clarke called the agreement “unique on the West Coast,” adding that it “provides us the dedicated workforce and the flexibility to run this 21st century facility efficiently and safely.”

ILWU President Robert McEllrath said, “The men and women of the ILWU have crafted hundreds of collective bargaining agreements over the past several decades that have made many companies profitable while also

providing family-wage jobs for communities like Longview. This agreement was crafted with the goals of safety, productivity, good jobs for the community, and stability for the grain industry in mind.”

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“Folks in this country have to begin to ask themselves whether democracy is still working, or, as I believe, that we have fallen into a plutocracy. Gridlock

is just a game being perpetrated in Washington to maintain the status quo of wealth for the few.”

**ARLENE VIOLET**  
FORMER RHODE ISLAND AG  
HAVE WE BECOME A PLUTOCRACY?  
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