



HETTY ROSENSTEIN
NJ Area Director

New Jersey Executive Branch Bargaining Report

7/1/2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As you may be aware, the 2011 Contract was originally due to expire 6-30-2015. Many things have happened in the last several months that have led us to think very carefully about negotiations with the Christie Administration. It has been necessary to focus on the pension and the budget because these campaigns will frame our political work, mobilization, member education and bargaining approach. Here is what we can tell you now:

1. The 2011 Contract required that either party notify the other that they want to negotiate a new agreement. The notification must come in the form of a registered letter received no later than February 1, 2015. The Contract says that if the letter is not received, the Contract is extended for a year as is. Neither CWA, AFSCME nor IFPTE sent in a letter. The Governor's Office of Employee Relations had to send CWA a registered letter received by February 1, 2015 or the Contract would extend. They sent us a registered letter received on February 4, 2015. CWA sent the Governor's office a letter saying that we reserved the right to say that the Contract was extended for one year. By not notifying us in time, it is our position that the Contract terms are extended.
2. The Administration has not asked for any bargaining days, perhaps because we have reserved this right to extend the Contract, perhaps because they are not interested in negotiations anyway. The Administration has met with some smaller unions for bargaining sessions but discussions have been preliminary so far. There have been no discussions with CWA, (or with AFSCME or IFPTE) and no effort to have discussions with CWA.
3. On June 29, 2015, the Office of Employee Relations emailed us a letter saying that it would not pay increments, clothing allowance, tool allowance or vision benefits past June 30, 2015, citing the expiration of the Contract. CWA has replied to that letter, we are filing a grievance, and we will take what legal action necessary to protect those benefits retroactive to July 1, 2015.

The Bargaining Committee, made up of eight Local Presidents, is meeting to discuss these issues and set a consistent approach to bargaining. Our position at this time is as follows:

- a. Our main focus in the past several months has been and will remain making sure that we protect our pension and healthcare benefits so that they are not so damaged by Governor Christie that they can't be repaired once he is gone.
- b. We expect negotiating a reasonable Contract to be difficult and long. It is in our interests to be patient and negotiate a fair contract rather than accept a bad or concessionary Contract now.

c. It is important, where possible, to coordinate our bargaining approach with other state worker unions which are at the table. All unions received similar notices to stop paying steps and allowances. Those unions will be notifying their members. CWA will coordinate however possible with our brother and sisters so we have a unified approach at the bargaining table.

We are, therefore, asking that you be patient about the progress at the bargaining table. We don't want to become part of the Governor's broader political agenda and we want to take our time and act with care. We are also being very careful in our communications so that they do not become part of the public dialogue surrounding the Governor's run for President and so that we do not make our Contract and our issues part of his politics. We hope that you will understand and appreciate that.

Over the next several weeks, Locals will communicate carefully with Local Executive Boards, Branch Officers, and Shop Stewards, so that your representatives understand what the Bargaining Committee is planning. As much as possible, we will communicate on phone calls and in meetings. **Worksite and membership meetings for state workers will be very important in the coming months. Please try to attend.**

We will, very shortly, hold a teletown hall with our members and with the Bargaining Committee so that you can hear as much as possible directly. In order, however, to be sure that only members are on that call, you will have to register to receive the call. If you have already filled out a Rapid Response form and you are receiving the teletown hall call, you do not have to fill out another. If you have not been getting the teletown hall call, you will need to give us your cell and home phone number, so that you receive the call and can get all of the information. You can get on the list to get the call by going to www.cwanj.org and clicking on "Sign up for updates." You can also email your information to Antoinette Miles at njvolunteer@cwa-union.org.

Thank you for your patience and your participation in our fight to save the pension and protect middle class jobs. This fight is not over. We are very proud of the role our Union played in seeing to it that the Legislature produced a budget with a full pension payment. Our members were outstanding – making phone calls, coming out to the Rally, and making their presence and power felt. If we keep up the same level of engagement, we will negotiate a Contract agreement we can be proud of.

In Solidarity,

John Rose, CWA Local 1031

Ken McNamara, CWA Local 1037

Patrick Kavanagh, CWA Local 1032

Shawn Ludwig, CWA Local 1038

Gaye Palmer, CWA Local 1033

Lionel Leach, CWA Local 1039

Adam Liebtog, CWA Local 1036

Carolyn Wade, CWA Local 1040