

## **FAQ on NJ State Executive Branch Job Security Agreement**

*No one likes having to deal with furloughs, defer a wage increase, or talk about filing for unemployment. State workers are making sacrifices under this agreement to save our jobs now and in the future.*

*Given the harsh reality of a more than \$10 billion dollar shortfall in the State budget, this proposal is our best option to protect our jobs and to minimize the economic harm. We aren't going to sugar-coat it. This proposal does involve some real sacrifices, but the alternative would be mass scale layoffs from which our worksites, families, and the services we provide to the residents of New Jersey would probably never recover.*

**The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) below tries to cover the most common questions coming from members about the tentative agreement.**

**MOST QUESTIONS CAN BE ADDRESSED BY READING THE MOA, THE SUMMARY, or LISTENING TO THE RECORDED MEMBERSHIP TOWN HALL CALL. HERE IS WHERE TO GET THEM:**

- MOA – [WWW.CWA1031.ORG](http://WWW.CWA1031.ORG)
- SUMMARY OF AGREEMENT – [WWW.CWA1031.ORG](http://WWW.CWA1031.ORG)
- RECORDED MEMBERSHIP CALL: [WWW.CWANJ.ORG](http://WWW.CWANJ.ORG)

*Please read through these documents before contacting the Local for questions. As we add more answers, we will color code them.*

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***I had vacation previously scheduled in July. Can/Should I rescind that and take furlough instead?***

Yes you can rescind a vacation request so that you have more available days in July to schedule furloughs, and can take furloughs on the days you would have otherwise taken vacation.

***Will I be paid for Friday, July 3 if I am furloughed during that week or the day before?***

According to Civil Service rules, you can have an unpaid furlough day prior to a paid holiday and still be paid for the holiday as long as you were in pay status during the week.

***On Schedule B, there are salary levels that stop receiving the \$600 CARES Act supplement. Why?***

If a person's earnings exceed the maximum possible unemployment benefit, then you do not receive unemployment. CARES supplement is only paid if you qualify for unemployment.

***Where can I find my salary?***

On our website at [www.cwa1031.org](http://www.cwa1031.org), we have the current State Executive Branch contract and salary schedules posted as permanent links in the right margin of the website. You can find your title and salary range in the appendix at the end of the Contract. The Salary Schedules show each range and step. So, if you find your title in the contract and it is a range 24, for example, you can then go to the Salary Schedule and find salary range 24 to see the value of each step.

### ***Will I be Furloughed?***

The answer to this question is probably yes. All members are presumed to be eligible for the furlough days unless you work in institutions, veterans homes, or at the Dept of Labor processing unemployment. Departments have the discretion to exempt additional people/programs. The Local supports additional exemptions, especially in those critical need areas working on COVID response and other mission-critical functions. The Local is in contact with the Departments we represent about identifying exemptions. You should know if you are exempted very soon.

### ***How Long/When will I be Furloughed?***

That can depend on where you work. **There will be an aggregate of at least 10 furlough days scheduled between June 29th and July 24, 2020 to maximize unemployment benefits and the \$600 weekly supplement under the CARES Act.**

Scheduling will be up to the departments and will ensure that operational needs are met. However, best efforts will be made to furlough the maximum number of days possible **between June 29th and July 24, 2020** if management isn't able to schedule you for all 10 days in that window, you will not be required to take furlough days after July 31, 2020.

In addition to the furlough days between June 29th and July 31st, Friday November 27th, 2020 (the day after Thanksgiving) and February 15, 2021 will both be unpaid furlough days, except for anyone who is required to work on those days. Anyone required to work on November 27th, 2020 will be required to take a self-scheduled furlough day by September 30th, 2021.

### ***Will I be eligible for Unemployment/How do I Get It?***

Yes, furloughed members are eligible for unemployment based on your annual income level, if you have any secondary employment, and how many days you work/receive regular pay vs. the maximum unemployment benefit for which you are eligible. Unemployment benefits are maxed at 855 per week.

We are working with the Department of Labor to provide a guidesheet to help members file and provide the correct application information to avoid processing delays.

### ***Will I Lose Money Because of the Furlough/How Much?***

The Furlough program will be structured for as minimal of an impact on compensation as possible. Once Unemployment and the additional \$600 per week under the CARES act is factored in, members whose salary is under \$75,000 will either break even or potentially even end up a little bit ahead. However, above that salary, some members will be in a deficit after unemployment is applied because they will be above the max UI benefit. Some of those losses will be offset with an additional bank of paid days off, and if you are in a deficit of 3 days' pay or more, you will be exempted – at your request – from the holiday furloughs in November 2020

and February 2021. See the attached chart (Schedule B) for a more detailed breakdown of where you fall in that calculation.

### **What About My Scheduled Raises?**

The July 1, 2020 across the board 2% increase will be postponed until December 1, 2021. The July 1, 2021 raise of 2.0% is unchanged. The final raise of 2.0% originally scheduled for April 1, 2022, will be deferred to July 1, 2022.

We will receive all out contractual raises before the end of this contract, but they will be delayed from their original dates.

### **What Impact will this have on my Pension?**

Pension contributions from the state to an employee's pension will proceed normally. This protects your pension service credit for the month of July at full salary.

Depending on the amount of furlough days, it may be necessary for an employee to write a check to make sure that their full contribution is on schedule or deductions

### **What About Paycheck Deductions?**

All deductions will still have to come out of your paycheck. These will include pension, healthcare, dues, taxes, and any other deduction that usually comes out of your paycheck. They will be taken in the normal amounts. If furloughs reduce your paycheck to where deductions cannot be made, payroll will make arrangements for direct payment or through other means. It will be handled according to policy when someone is on an extended unpaid leave of absence.

### **Will my Seniority be Impacted?**

No, furlough days as per the agreement will not impact seniority.

### **Will I Still Accrue Benefit Time?**

Yes benefit time will continue to accrue as usual.

### **I Wasn't Able to Use my Vacation Time this Year due to COVID-19. Can I Carry That Time Over? What about XP Time?**

With written request you can carry over this year's vacation time into the next year.

### **How Do I Receive Unemployment?**

You will have to apply for it once you are furloughed. You cannot apply for it in advance. The application is online at <https://myunemployment.nj.gov/>. We are working with the Department of Labor to prepare a comprehensive "cheat sheet" that will walk you through the process and tell you specifically how to answer each question. Make sure to have that sheet in front of you when you apply. Answering the questions incorrectly can result in a delay, or ineligibility.

### **How will I be affected if I have secondary employment?**

Secondary employment will have to be reported, and can be deducted from your total unemployment amount.

### **What About the July 4th Holiday?**

Members can request to take July 3<sup>rd</sup> (when Independence Day will be Observed since the 4th falls on a Saturday this year) as a furlough day to convert the paid holiday into an unpaid day. Management may or may not approve this. It also requires coding in eCATS which may be too complicated for the State to handle at this time. We suggest anyone who wants to do that to make the request when discussing furlough schedules with their managers.

### **I Already Have Vacation Time Scheduled in July. What will Happen to That?**

Depending on how much time off you have scheduled, some of that time may have to be converted to furlough days, but previously approved vacations shouldn't be impacted. You should talk to your supervisor/manager about scheduling.

### **Will There be Layoffs?**

The purpose of this agreement is to prevent layoffs. It contains a "no layoff" provision through December 31, 2021. While no one can predict the future and we can't make an absolute guarantee, the savings generated from this furlough arrangement should prevent layoffs in the future.

### **I am a CWA Member, but I Don't Work for the Executive Branch. Does this Agreement Impact Me?**

No. This agreement only applies to members who work for the Executive Branch. While agreements with the Executive Branch can sometimes set a pattern that other employers follow, separate agreements would have to be reached with those employers where possible and necessary.