

## **Urgent Notice to all SEIU 925 members employed by King County**

As you've probably heard, King County is facing a significant budget shortfall. County officials gave notice to the King County Coalition of Unions that they were planning to impose a two-week leave of absence on all County employees in order to balance their proposed budget for 2009. Knowing that the impact of receiving only half a month's pay was unacceptable, we began negotiations with King County. After over thirty hours of negotiations intended to lessen the impact on members, we've reached a tentative agreement.

### **The tentative agreement (TA) has been endorsed by the King County Coalition of Labor Unions.**

Each bargaining unit will vote separately on this proposal. The protections and guarantees listed in the Tentative Agreement will only apply to members of bargaining units that vote to ratify the TA. For bargaining units that reject the proposal, the workers in that group will be subject to unilateral implementation (the County can decide who, when, and how furloughs or cuts will be implemented) and will not receive the guarantees provided by the TA.

Please read carefully the attached tentative agreement. Pay attention to items that we fought to include: COLA protections, preservation of benefit accruals, and (as much as possible) equity throughout the County. We heard from many members that if they had to lose days of work, they didn't want 'favored' employees or management personnel to be exempted.

Also, please note that the labor representatives fought very hard to protect the interests of our members. Of course, early in the process, each union contacted its respective legal advisors; SEIU's attorney told us that King County can legally impose such a furlough. Once that was determined, our union focused on an aggressive fight to reach the most favorable conditions for workers under the circumstances.

Below is a list of items we won during these negotiations:

- The furlough days are spread evenly throughout the year to minimize the economic impact on individuals. We believed that losing just one day's pay per month was easier on a family's budget than facing the prospect of losing half a month's pay all at once;
- The furlough days apply across-the-board to management and other employees that traditionally are not affected by such concessions;
- The Agreement allows for special consideration for employees at the lowest end of the pay scale (those earning below \$16.92 per hour will be allowed to use accrued paid time off or donated leave from others to offset their lost wages; \$16.92 was determined to be 200% of the poverty index for a family of 3, a figure often used by government agencies as a threshold to allow citizens access to services);
- The Agreement protects employees from experiencing a life-long negative impact to PERS 1 or 2 retirement benefits if they are about to retire;

- The Agreement protects leave accruals, health benefits, retirement benefits (as much as possible), probationary periods, and seniority rights;
- The furlough will demonstrate to the general public that public employees are sacrificing in order to protect jobs and services to the community;
- The furlough will have an impact on the public's access to services through the closure of offices and discontinuation of many public services on these ten days.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, the tentative agreement provides three important guarantees. If bargaining units ratify the TA, they will receive these guarantees. If the proposal is rejected, these 'guarantees' will not apply:

1. A YES vote will guarantee the traditional cost-of-living adjustments (90% of the CPI, with a minimum of 2% and a maximum of 6%) for 2009 and 2010 (especially important for open contracts and for those that will expire in the near future).
2. A YES vote will guarantee that, unless there is a bona fide County emergency, the furlough days endured in 2009 will be returned to workers in the form of comp days – half in 2010, half in 2011. Members may use them instead of (and/or in addition to) vacation days when scheduling annual time off at the beginning of each year.
3. A YES vote will guarantee protection from additional layoffs that would otherwise be implemented in 2009.

Remember, each bargaining unit will be voting separately on this proposal.

*Details on where & when your vote will be taking place will be available shortly;*

*all voting will occur either during the week beginning November 3<sup>rd</sup> or the week of November 10<sup>th</sup>.*

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